



PROPOSAL FOR EQUITY SERVICES

Respectfully Submitted to the:
River Forest School District #90
River Forest, Illinois

April 10, 2017



The National Equity Project has 20 years of experience partnering with system leaders to deliver on the promises they make in their communities to provide an exceptional and transformative public education. Our unique development approach focuses on the technical, relational, social, and cultural aspects of complex change efforts focused on achieving equitable results.

In our view, working to achieve educational equity entails:

- Removing the predictability of success or failure that currently correlates with race, socio-economic status, and any other social or cultural factor.
- Ending inequitable practices, addressing individual and systemic biases, and creating inclusive multi-cultural school environments for adults and children.
- Discovering and cultivating the unique talents and interests that everyone possesses.

Our mission is to dramatically improve the experiences, outcomes, and life options for children and families situated furthest from the opportunity in our communities. We do this by building the capacity of leaders to reimagine, redesign, and retool structures and processes in service of ensuring children's intellectual, physical, socio-cultural, and emotional growth and development. We believe that every child in America deserves the right to a quality education and we support leaders to make good on that promise.

We are a coaching and leadership development organization, offering sustained, embedded support to system leaders *across sector* to make more effective decisions and take informed action in their day-to-day work. We offer a unique blend of technical expertise and coaching support to achieve systems change, including strategy development, leadership and team development, culturally responsive and instructional decision-making, process design and facilitation. We aim to transform the outcomes and experiences of young people and families in places that have persistently reproduced inequitable racialized outcomes. Our commitment lies in increasing the capacity of leaders (formal and informal) across a system to diagnose, develop, and design a new way to achieve the desired experiences and results in their communities.

Toward our transformative vision, we partner with organizations, districts, and state and local initiatives that aspire to:

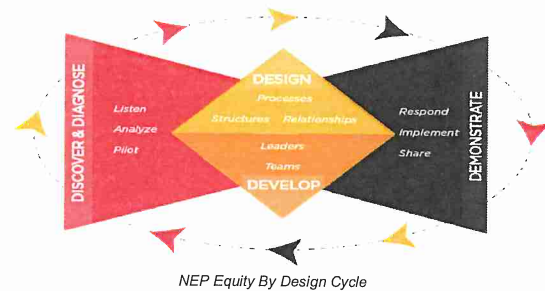
- ☀ Increase access and opportunity to quality schools, housing, food, health care, transportation, before/after care and other resources that contribute to academic and life success.
- ☀ Increase opportunities to learn so that educational outcomes, graduation rates, and college and career readiness are not predictable by race, class, or other social factor.
- ☀ Increase community leadership and engagement so that parents and families are authentic partners in defining success and creating and shaping the educational experiences of their children, their schools, and their classrooms.
- ☀ Disrupt, dismantle, and address issues of systemic oppression (race, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, etc.) so that families and communities can be self-determining, self-renewing, and educated with increased political, educational, and economic opportunity.

We work with our partners to apply both a *racial equity* and *systems-thinking* lens to their understanding of the root causes of inequity in their communities and systems. We support systems leaders to address both *technical* and *relational* challenges – supporting them to identify and develop necessary structures, patterns, and processes, while simultaneously attending to and planning for the often overlooked, but critical dimensions of change including information, relationships, and identity within their organizations and/or across cross-sector initiatives.

Our Partnership Approach

People created the existing system and it will take people, working together across difference, to reimagine and reinvent it to ensure equitable experiences and outcomes for all members of the community. This requires developing leaders (formal and informal) across sectors and institutions who have the political will, skill, knowledge and emotional intelligence to recognize those aspects of the inherited system that need to be interrupted, eliminate practices and policies that continue to serve only the elite, and create new ways of caring for and educating all children, not just some.

Our NEP “Equity by Design” Cycle illustrates the approach we take in our engagements with clients. The approach recognizes that equity work in complex systems is not linear or static. Ours is a human-centered approach informed first by stakeholders (including community members) in the system itself. At every stage there are a set of decisions and actions that system leaders can make. Our work with systems leaders is to support them to see the choices and make decisions in alignment with their values and desired outcomes. The Equity by Design Cycle encourages us to begin with current state – listen to what the system is telling us and together determine and identify the root causes of the problems we seek to address. We then have the choice to both develop human capacities and reimagine or design structures, processes and practices that support us to reach our goals.



Our Unique Approach to Developing Equity Leadership

Most of us are accustomed to leading and being led from the “outside-in”. More often the drivers of our decisions are external requirements, mandates, expectations, programs, or supervisors. Rarely do we have the opportunity to tap into our own will to make a difference, what author Michael Fullan calls *intrinsic motivation* which he names as one of the four drivers for whole systems change (Fullan 2011).

In our experience, Leading for Equity requires one to:

- Navigate the discomfort of not knowing the “answer”
- Explore and heal from the negative effects of our own oppression and privilege...and support others to do the same
- Create and facilitate *brave* spaces that honor both cognition and emotion
- Develop the courage to interrupt and transform inequitable systems into places of opportunity for young people and adults.

Working towards equity requires courageous and thoughtful leadership. Tackling inequity involves working through social relationships, personal beliefs, and organizational values as well as managing plans, programs, and initiatives. Leaders for equity must be able to raise difficult issues while building unity across difference in order to advocate for and support more equitable policies and practices.

We believe that transformational leadership flows from an internal reservoir that allows a person to persist with equal parts strength and care when the terrain feels dangerous. In contrast to most leadership development programs, our approach supports leaders to identify their core beliefs and values about equity (as individuals and as a team); begin to filter their actions through the prism of these beliefs; utilize new tools and frameworks; and consider new ways of thinking and talking that catalyze creative, collective action.

Our Leading for Equity curriculum provides opportunities for sharing, reflection, and planning in order to inform approaches to our current, everyday work. Leaders deepen their commitment, relationships, and efficacy while developing practices and strategies toward equity goals and receive expert coaching, guidance, and facilitation to work together to address the personal and technical challenges they face in their equity efforts.

Proposed Services for 2017-18

Leadership for Equity Institute Registration

The Leading for Equity Institute will focus on developing awareness, knowledge, and skills that enable colleagues and partners to have conversations about equity that lead to productive action. Participants will deepen their commitment, relationships, and efficacy while developing strategies to achieve equity goals. Teams receive expert, caring guidance and facilitation to work together to address the personal and technical challenges they face in their educational equity efforts.

Leading for Equity participants examine:

- ☀ The effects of racism and other forms of bias on education policies and practices
- ☀ Concrete skills for leading change in challenging contexts toward their equity goals
- ☀ The importance of emotional intelligence and trust in leading equity efforts
- ☀ Research, tools, and resources for equity-focused leadership and team development

Leadership for Equity in Complex Systems

As leaders for equity take their shared commitments into their daily work they face equity challenges that are complex- so solutions must balance technical and relational approaches.

The Inclusivity Board and The Board of Education:

We propose designing learning sessions for the Inclusivity Board and for the Board of Education, to support the leaders on these two Boards as they work to understand and respond to equity challenges for students and families in the District.

The Administrative Team:

Over three consulting sessions, we propose to support the Administrative Team to engage an equity lens within their decisions related to dilemmas of practice. In addition, these sessions will allow all District administrators to come together around a shared equity imperative or vision that will continue to inform collaborative decision making about all of the work that follows.

Equity in Data Based Inquiry Consulting

As leaders and teachers work to make decisions and take actions to support all students to succeed, they face a range of dilemmas; including interrupting disparities in disciplinary patterns, academic mastery and access to honors and advanced placement classes that align with college preparedness and success. The process of addressing these gaps requires all educators to maintain awareness of these data patterns through the use of disaggregated data at all levels of the system (individual teachers, teacher teams, school administrators and district level administrators). We propose to provide consulting support to district staff in creating accessible displays of disaggregated data and protocols for examining and discussing these disparities within teacher and administrator collaborative decision making, while maintaining and strengthening trusting relationships between colleagues and caring relationships with students.

Teaching for Equity and Universal Design for Learning

NEP proposes to lead a one-day Teaching for Equity retreat, focused on maintaining a commitment to equity within implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The elements within, and tenants of UDL hold great promise for addressing the District's equity challenges. This retreat will support District UDL teacher leaders to understand the conditions necessary within instructional design and delivery that are essential for addressing the impact of implicit bias and stereotype threat on student learning, as well as, the essential relationship between culture and cognition.

Teaching for Equity Seminar

NEP proposes to lead a Teaching for Equity Seminar for all district leaders and teachers. This learning session will be focused on supporting the teaching staff to continue to explore the impact of culture on learning for students who are furthest from success, and how to intentionally develop approaches that will work for them. At the heart of this work is developing purposeful, caring relationships between teachers and students that honor students' identity, culture and personal gifts and talents. These relationships, when formed as learning partnerships, can support teachers to connect with and motivate all students to be independent learners who can understand and act on what they need to become college and career-ready.

Proposed Timeline and Costs

Program Component	Client Group	Timeline	Cost
Leading for Equity Institute	Administrative Team	Residential Institute Attendance October 2017 or March 2018	\$16,500
Leading for Equity within Complex Systems	Administrative Team	Three 2-Hour Team Consulting/Learning Sessions	\$5,500
	Inclusivity Board	One Half-Day Consulting/Learning Session	\$2,500
	D90 Board of Education	One Half-Day Learning Session	\$2,500
Equity in Data Based Inquiry Consulting	Directors of Technology and Curriculum and Instruction	Travel and Consulting	\$2,000
Equity and Universal Design for Learning	Instructional Coaches and Teacher Leaders of UDL	One Day Retreat <i>Two NEP Staff</i>	\$6,400
Teaching for Equity	District teachers and staff	One Half-Day Learning Session Early Fall	\$3,000
Project fees include planning and travel time, materials development and production, and reflection and debriefing. Project costs DO NOT include travel expenses.		Subtotal	\$38,400
Expenses for all travel will be invoiced based on actual costs, estimated at 5% of the total contract.		Projected travel costs	\$1,920
Total Expected Fees			\$40,320