



NATIONAL
EQUITY
PROJECT

PROPOSAL FOR EQUITY DESIGN SERVICES

Respectfully Submitted to the:
Dr. Carol Kelley, Superintendent
Oak Park School District 97
Oak Park, Illinois

June 8, 2016



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, creating equitable policies, 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:

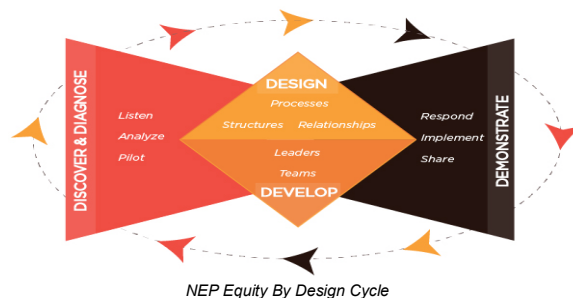
- ☀ Increase access and opportunity to quality schools, housing, food, health care, transportation, before/after care and other resources that contribute to academic and life success.
- ☀ Increase opportunities to learn so that educational outcomes, graduation rates, and college and career readiness 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.

NEP’s Equity Leadership Competencies

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. In the words of Sharon Daloz Parks, “Those who practice leadership for equity must confront, disappoint, and dismantle and at the same time energize, inspire, and empower.” We have found that there are specific leadership competencies that leaders for equity need. Equity consciousness and commitment allows leaders across the system articulate clear and universal goals while acknowledging the reality of structural inequity. Leaders understand the shared fate of all people and communities and thus commit to target strategies and resources so that students and families furthest from opportunity reach the goals no matter how wide the current gaps.

The National Equity Project supports leaders to identify their core beliefs on equity (as individuals and as teams); begin to filter their actions through the prism of these beliefs; utilize new tools and frameworks that match different levels of complexity; and consider new ways of thinking and talking that catalyze creative, innovative and collective action.

Proposed Services

Oak Park School District has initiated a *vision planning process* in which over 250 students, teachers, administrators, and community members were engaged to articulate what their experiences and perspectives are in terms of “current state” in Oak Park, their vision for the future, and what some of the opportunities and challenges are going forward.

Leading for Equity Competencies



The School Board and Superintendent will be developing a vision statement and articulating district priorities based on this and other data collected. In order to support district and site-level leaders to understand and operationalize the identified priorities, the National Equity Project proposes to provide Leadership and Strategy Development support to District 97.

More specifically, NEP proposes to support the D97 Leadership Team to:

- Engage in dialogue and increase understanding about school board decisions and priorities
- Increase equity consciousness and articulate a shared equity imperative
- Learn a change management framework and begin to create conditions for aligned action
- Design a process for site-level dialogue, decision making, and action planning in service of school board priorities and a district wide equity imperative

Proposed Services Timeline and Costs

Program Component	Client Group	Timeline	Cost
<i>Leading for Equity Learning, Dialogue, and Work Sessions</i> Develop Leading for Equity Leadership Competencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity Consciousness & Commitment • Design Leadership • Facilitative Leadership 	District Leadership Team	July-August 2016 (2) full-day facilitated sessions (2) half-day facilitated sessions	\$9000
	District Leadership Team & Site-leaders/Leadership Teams	September 2016 (1) full-day facilitated session (1) half-day facilitated session	\$6000
Executive Leadership Coaching	Superintendent & Identified Site Leaders (TBD)	July – August 2016 (10) Hour-long Coaching Sessions	\$2500

Project fees include planning and travel time, materials development and production, and reflection and debriefing. Project costs DO NOT include travel expenses.	Subtotal	\$17,500
Expenses for all travel will be invoiced based on actual costs, estimated at 10% of the total contract.	Projected travel costs	\$1750
Total Expected Fees		\$19,250