Reflections on the Equity Conversation

Good start to the equity conversation... How do I begin these talks in my school? What does “equity of outcomes” look like? How do we deliver it? My lack of ability/clarity in this area scares me.

Winter Meeting, 2001

Racism is so prevalent in our society, it is in the air we breathe. It is part of the operational practices in the institutions that function in our society. What is important for individuals, I believe, is to understand how it operates, understand our own beliefs, and values with regard to people of color, and monitor our own behavior. Each of us can influence the institutions in which we function and affect to impact individuals.

New York

Many children of middle and upper class Africans do poorly on standardized tests. Why is this so? Can we have a discussion about equity without discussing race in a country that in the last century segregated and in the century before enslaved? I don’t think so. Race is a difficult, painful topic but we cannot ignore it. I have been troubled every time I am present at a national meeting and the issue of equity arises either purposefully, placed on the agenda or by accident. I often feel that people don’t speak their minds because they are afraid. We need to continue to talk about race and class.

Yesterday the Sub picked on me for no reason. When the table next to me was talking, the Sub blamed it on me. She yelled, “Quit talking!” I said, “Excuse me?” Then she rudely said, “Do you know English?” That made me angry inside because just because I’m Mexican it doesn’t mean I don’t know English.

Student, Eisenhower High School, Houston

I really appreciate this conversation. It’s probably the dilemma that troubles me most. Can we as a humanity move forward and what is this going to take? It seems to me that dealing with our fears is part of it. I wonder if we also have to “hold our own views gently” as Senge says in his piece on dialogue. This is difficult for me.

I have always viewed my beliefs as who I am. I realize how this gets in the way of communicating or connecting to people who think differently from me.

Indiana

Equity is what someone perceives as right or fair. I don’t believe equity can be generalized and applied to people as a whole because one man’s equity could be another man’s injustice.

Student, Eisenhower High School, Houston

What we are realizing is that even when we think we have taken off our “lenses” we are wearing contacts and still see through bias. While we may never be able to see without bias we can certainly act with forethought and integrity. Sounds simple, but is difficult.

March 1

In October a diverse group of educators met along the shores of Lake Champlain to discuss how to continue the work of the National School Reform Faculty that Faith Dunne had fostered in Vermont. We explored the extensive impact she had had on Vermont schools and how we could

Connections: a Journal of the National School Reform Faculty

Spring 2002

What’s Happening In Arizona

In 2002

April 19

Southwest Regional CFG Coaches Retreat

April 20

Spring Symposium on School Improvement

July 29 - August 2

New Coaches’ Institute

for more information

<www.nsrfharmony.org>

What’s Happening In New York

In 2002

April 12 - 13

New Coaches Training Part 2

May 17

CFG Spring Colloquium/Coaches Retreat

for more information, contact Nancy Mohr at <nannmohr@rcn.com>

Vermont as a Center of Activity

Gavin Wallace, Vermont

Vermont Institute for Science, Math & Technology: Teacher Quality Enhancement — strives to strengthen leadership capacity in education

Washington State

Exploring how

Americorps*VISTA— Committed to making a seamless connection between schools & community

Vermont Rural Partnership/Rural School & Community Trust — strives to strengthen leadership capacity in education

Vermont as a Center of Activity

What we’d like to accomplish in the next year as the Vermont Center

• Complete the database of Vermont coaches and seminar participants;
• Implement supports to sustain the work that has begun;
• Develop a regional coaches support system;
• Work to establish teams — principal and staff attending initial seminar followed by ongoing support for participants;
• Set up a Vermont coaches listerv to be moderated and active;
• Hold a colloquium followed by a Vermont Center of Activity meeting;
• Help to sustain existing CFGs by preparing new coaches;
• Have CFG concepts be broadly understood by DOG/local standards boards/TQN etc.;
• Establish an administrators’ CFG to provide continued support for principals;
• Plan for an experienced coaches seminar (summer 2003);
• Conduct three effective seminars in summer 2002.

Affiliated Organizations

Vermont Institute for Science, Math & Technology: Teacher Quality Enhancement — strives to strengthen leadership capacity in education

Vermont Rural Partnership/Rural School & Community Trust — strives to strengthen leadership capacity in education

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What’s Happening In Vermont

In 2002

May 16

Vermont Coaches’ Retreat

July 14 - 18

Rutland School District New Coaches Seminar

July 14 - 18

New Coaches Seminar

August 5 - 9

VISTA Coaches Seminar