TRANSFORMING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LEAD TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM LEARNING COMMUNITY

SESSION 1 NEWSLETTER

The Transforming Early Childhood Education Lead Teacher Preparation Learning Community is a space to support, inform, and generate dialogue to ensure successful implementation of the innovative and transformative work being done by each of the teams across the nation. Over the course of the orientation, Session 1, and office hours, connections have been made and information has been shared to work through challenges and generate ideas to propel the work forward. Each learning cycle, this newsletter will summarize the content of each learning session, the office hours, and additional resources as relevant.

What's Inside?

General Overview
A high-level summary of content discussed during the learning sessions, as well as connections made among participants

Spotlight Discussions
Key ideas and suggestions shared during small group discussions

Office Hours
Additional ideas and support for individual teams offered by our guest lecturer, specifically related to project goals with a focus on equity

Resources
Links to further information and support

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

The session began with connecting participants in pairs and trios to learn more about members of the learning community and to identify a set of community agreements. Participants enjoyed meeting with one another, reflecting on Dr. Iruka's video, and discussing the community agreements that will be the foundation for the learning community.

COMMUNITY LEARNING AGREEMENTS:

- Stay present and engaged
- Grace and space
- Center learning and growth
- Maintain confidentiality and carry lessons forward
- Struggle together as individuals and professionals
- Consider and apply racial equity analysis

> "When racial equity is not consciously addressed, racial inequity is often unconsciously replicated."

The Racial Equity Impact Analysis (REIA) framework provides a common lens and structure to support planning and decision-making about the implementation of goals, strategies, and policies related to higher education's increasingly innovative practices to diversify the early childhood lead teacher workforce. The REIA is a common tool to help facilitate conversations, identify barriers and blind spots, and ultimately minimize adverse consequences of decisions that are being made. The REIA framework is a support that will foster learning and new connections and will result in more equitable decisions, strategies, and policies to transform early childhood education.

During Session 1, SRC reviewed the framework to serve as a common resource and language to support each team in implementing the team's grant goals. Click here to review the recording of the REIA overview.

SPOTLIGHT DISCUSSIONS

North Seattle College, Georgia State University, and the College of Menominee Nation had the opportunity to share more about their projects, plans, goals, and challenges during the spotlight sessions. In each session, participants made connections with one another, ideas were shared, and possible solutions were generated in support of the practice problem shared by each team. The following are key takeaways from the conversations that took place in each of the spark sessions.

NORTH SEATTLE COLLEGE

Rethinking barrier classes: developing equitable degrees for all members of the workforce

Participants discussed the barriers to achieving advanced degrees faced by students whose first language is not English. North Seattle shared the college's experience with English proficiency standards creating a ceiling for these students and the additional complications of cost. Often, nontraditional students don't see themselves as "college students" at first; however, as they experience success, they want to continue their educational journey. North Seattle College would like to better support these students to continue their educational journey. The team shared the college's success in offering some courses in native languages, which has increased access and student success. Participants shared that similar standards and policies in their institutes of higher learning also make it difficult to offer a variety of classes in languages other than English. Potential solutions were suggested: to look at specific scholarships and grants like TEACH and to find advocates in departments outside of education. As a team and learning community examining the adverse impacts of policies and procedures, which are only compounded by the cost of higher education, we must continue to identify alternatives and improvements that lead to equitable vitality and sustainability.

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Cultivating a professional educational community of care and agency

Participants discussed the need to utilize a multifaceted approach to cultivate a professional educational community of care and agency to ultimately transform early childhood education, specifically by meeting the needs of nontraditional students. Georgia State provided an overview of the cohort model launched this year to serve 40 students and described the unexpected barriers for students that impacted recruitment and retention. Barriers including prior loans, loss of financial benefits, and issues with transfer credits severely impacted the ability of all students interested in the program to participate. Participants shared their own challenges with recruitment and retention of students, as well several possible suggestions to support students before and during cohort models. By adding intentional components to cohort models, students can receive support and resources to inspire and ensure success. Learning opportunities, such as a pre-semester, for students prior to starting the program can help inform students of possible barriers such as prior loan challenges, predatory lending, and financial literacy. This time could also be used to build connections with faculty, staff, and students before coursework begins. Taking opportunities for students to share their hopes and fears, from the beginning, can support faculty and staff in identifying resources, strategies, and speakers or mentors to support incoming students. One idea was to initiate a student advisory group that can raise issues as well as offer additional perspectives on policies and procedures that promote the success of students who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and minimize adverse consequences. Such a group could provide a space for students to continually share hopes and fears and to offer suggestions for success. Another idea was to make paid release time available as a strategy to support students who are currently working in the classroom. This would allow working students to maintain their livelihoods and still engage in their teacher education courses.

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COLLEGE OF MENOMINEE NATION

Nation building

Improving higher education in tribal communities by embedding the tribal community's strengths in all aspects of higher education—from course content to all pillars of support—will enhance and further nation building. Using funds of knowledge consistently to better understand students provides an opportunity to develop curricula around personal contexts, skills, and experiences. Using this knowledge also allows students to see themselves at the table and incorporated in the educational experience, while validating Indigenous and non-Western perspectives on expertise and knowledge. Integrating strengths of the community and Indigenous knowledge from local and elder community members will also improve the reach of Indigenous knowledge and culture so that it permeates all aspects of tribal communities.

There is an opportunity to use culturally responsive pedagogy that meets students where they are and integrates content while centering students' real lives, although making this work in the context of Western and white-centered requirements is challenging. Recognizing and emphasizing students' strengths as well as increasing intentional support will help students persist and be successful in higher education. Examining the pillars of support—identifying what is missing and what can be strengthened—is an opportunity to improve the community.

💡 OFFICE HOURS

North Seattle participated in office hours with Dr. Iheoma Iruka to continue their conversation about barriers that exist and how to develop equitable degrees for all members of the workforce. At the heart of the conversation was the reality that we must work together to unearth racism. We must ask ourselves reflective questions that provoke thought and change: for example, how does white supremacy live in the ways we operate higher education? We must look beyond surface barriers, such as financial barriers, to uncover implicit biases that exist among faculty and examine what is being taught in each course.

In Dr. Iruka's words… "invite them to the kitchen table."

How do we do this work? Consider an alternative vantage point, incorporating the voices of the unheard and interrogating the system. Create intentional spaces for folx to share their wishes and dreams—a space for consistent and ongoing open dialogue. In Dr. Iruka's words, "invite them to the kitchen table." Folx from the same community can come together to

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share wishes and dreams, discuss what is going on, what they are feeling in their heart, what is burdening them, and how it can be alleviated. Consider empathetic focus groups, to have ongoing open dialogue among students to help shape and develop equitable degrees. Provide opportunities for written open responses: What is the one thing you would change for early childhood education? What in your classroom will work for a Black or brown child? If student voices are empowered from the beginning, they are part of the conversation, and they are change agents.

Education is supposed to be a way to deal with inequities. How can we be sure that education does not perpetuate inequities?

RESOURCES

Council Office of Racial Equity: Racial Equity Impact Assessments

Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative: Racial Equity Toolkit to Assess Policies, Initiatives, Programs, and Budget Issues

Inside Higher Ed: Envisioning Higher Education as Antiracist

Children's Equity Project: Start with Equity—14 Priorities to Dismantle Systematic Racism In Early Care and Education

LOOKING AHEAD

- **PRE-WORK FOR SESSION 2**: December 27, 2021

- **LEARNING COMMUNITY SESSION 2:** January 14, 2022

- **MID-POINT LISTENING SESSION:** February 11, 2022