

## Leah's Light Bulb Project 2.0

### Description of your project:

"If you just use good instructional practices, you don't have to worry about equity." –CESD certified

"Why can't Latino parents just let it go (their native language)." –CESD administrator

"Her cough made her voice so low, she sounded like a tranny." –Cisgender teacher to another cisgender teacher during an instructional workshop

"I can tell you're very passionate about this topic (equity), but reality bites." –School board member

"Sometimes my hair gets all frizzy too." –White CESD administrator to a black classified staff member who wore her hair naturally

"There were so many different languages represented in our school that it was best for everyone that we all used English all the time." –CESD administrator

"Oh, I have two friends who are women who did that too." –A heterosexual teacher to me after sharing my wife and I had just gotten married

The above quotes are a few snapshots from my experience working as a CIE Services Consultant at Clackamas ESD the last two school years. The comments range from manifestations of the unconscious biases of "good people" to beliefs that are tightly connected to people's values. All of the above comments made me feel uncomfortable, some on a professional level as they conflict with the work I do supporting English learner (Title III) and Migrant programs (Title 1C) and others on a personal level as I identify with and ally with various minority groups.

While North Clackamas School District has emerged as a leader in the Equity arena in recent years, under the leadership of Superintendent of the Year Matthew Utterback, our smaller member districts seem to be left behind. An equity seminar series, hosted by Clackamas ESD, may make a difference in the future equitable practices of both our member districts and our own agency.

In the spring of 2016, I surveyed our member districts' Title III and Migrant Coordinators. 50% of our coordinators indicated **Equity** as a **high priority topic** for professional development for the 2016-17 school year. Shortly after receiving that data, I submitted the first draft of this Light Bulb Proposal. I did not repeat the survey this year, but I can confidently say the need for professional development for districts is even greater than before. I meet with the coordinators monthly and they express great concern for their undocumented youth in particular.

Clackamas ESD and our member districts pay dues to the Oregon Leadership Network. We have a guaranteed number of seats at their biannual conferences and preferred pricing at their sponsored equity workshops. However, participation in the OLN's Institutes and in professional development provided by the National Equity Project through Education Northwest has been minimal. The districts who have taken part in OLN events have sent single attendees or very small teams and it is unclear how that participation has transmuted into more equitable outcomes for students in their districts.

It is not only our member districts that need more support in equitable practices. Several of the quotes above come from within our own organization; they are conversations in hallways and over cubicle walls. For CESD to be a healthy workplace for all employees, we need to make it a safer and more welcoming place. And that starts with getting comfortable with different kinds of conversations. Conversations about race, language, poverty, gender, sexual orientation, and more.

My proposal is to provide an Equity Series of 3-5 seminars with dynamic and powerful presenters. Each participating school district and the ESD would assemble a team of equity ambassadors to attend. This team would ideally represent a wide variety of departments, programs, and schools within their districts. It would be composed of students, parents, classified, certified, administrative staff, and school board members. The district team, in addition to attending the seminar series together, would participate in half-day work sessions. The work sessions would allow time for team building, preparing for tackling the seminar topic, processing of the seminar experience, and making action plans. A day might look like this:

### **Sample Schedule**

8:00-9:00 Team Building

9:15-11:00 Blind Spots & Courageous Conversations

11:30-12:00 Lunch

12:30-2:30 Seminar 1: Oregon Black History with Walidah Imarisha

2:45-4:00 Team Debrief

A draft flyer is attached as an example, which includes three suggested presenters. Walidah Imarisha could start us off with her powerful timeline of Oregon Black History. Dr. Robin DiAngelo would follow with an examination of how institutional racism still governs present day society and education. Finally, Dr. Brianna Stiller would lead us into the future with best practices for addressing gender non-conforming students. When I originally drafted this proposal I reached out to all three of these individuals and they were very interested in working with us. That was a year ago now. If these speakers are unavailable or unattainable, there is no end to the list of excellent experts we could contact.

Equity is not just a concern for our students; it is also a concern for educational staff. We are all lifelong learners. Continued professional development in the area of equity will create a healthier and safer workplace for adults and naturally bring about better outcomes for our students. We must examine our own practices and behavior in order to provide environments and policies that support student success.

### **Goals or expected outcomes:**

Teams who participate in the Equity Series would be guided through creating their own professional development or some product(s) to take back to their districts. Some product examples may include a Commitment to Safe Schools, an Equity Lens, a Non-Binary Gender Policy, a Policy on Exclusionary Practices, etc.

All districts who participate in the Equity Series would be encouraged to use a pre and post assessment with both students and staff. The expectation is that both students and staff would report healthier interactions with each other and report that school is a more safe, welcoming, and inclusive place to be after having taken part in the Equity Seminar Series.

Districts could also select specific data to monitor from the beginning of their participation in the seminar series to up to two or three years afterwards. Data such as harassment, exclusion rates, dropout rates, etc are all markers we would expect to go down because of equity work. Conversely, we would want rates in attendance, graduation, participation in extra-curriculars and post-high school education to rise.

### **Anticipated expenses:**

Estimates for a 3-day series:

Qualified and quality presenters: \$8,000

Morning refreshments and catered lunch: \$5,000

Materials: \$500

**Other support needed to implement:**

This proposal needs the support of the CESD Board, CESD Administration, and District Leadership.

Without support of the Light Bulb Project, registration fees per person would be about \$100. If the Light Bulb Project covered the cost of the presenters, for example, fees could be reduced to meals and materials, or only \$40 a person for three days of professional development.

**Timeline:**

Spring 2017-Contact presenters

June 2017-Set date(s) for event and contract presenters

June-Fall 2017-Advertise event and register attendees

Fall 2017-Finalize conference schedule and plan for event logistics, materials, etc.

**Evaluation Method:**

Teams and participants individually will engage in formative assessment during work sessions in the form of reflective activities and structured interactions with peers to encourage internalization of the learning and initiate change within themselves and their districts. Time will be provided for seminar attendees to participate in a pre and post assessment using a Socratic survey. This will provide data for CESD staff to evaluate the effectiveness of the Equity Series. We will also collect responses from our district in regards to meeting the goals they set for themselves as described in the Goals and Expected Outcomes section above.