

Leadership Matters from an Equity Perspective

By Mimi Lufkin

ARE THERE DAYS WHEN YOU GAZE ACROSS THE SEA of faces in your classroom, school hallways, athletic fields, or even your desk and wonder, “How can I possibly reach all these students? They are so different.”

As the student population becomes more diverse, so must our skills as teachers and leaders in career and technical education. This challenge has been laid out for us by our professional association in the position paper, *Reinventing the American High School for the 21st Century*:

“The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), on behalf of career and technical education professionals in the United States, advocates for clearly focusing American high schools on the goal of preparing every student for full participation in a spectrum of college opportunities, meaningful work, career advancement, and active citizenship. We call upon leaders to make needed changes in school culture, instructional strategies and organizational priorities that will support this new purpose.”

Being an educational leader responding to the challenge of improving schools means creating an environment where students from diverse groups have equal opportunity for educational success, economic self-sufficiency and community responsibility. School improvement must focus not only on what students should

know and be able to do but on the fair and equal access of a diverse student population. Being prepared for this challenge means having access to an armament of tools, resources and skills, as well as a commitment to equity.

Setting the Standards

To achieve the goals of standards-based educational reform, attention must be focused on all aspects of the educational system. Institutional as well as curriculum changes are necessary to increase student success. The National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE) has identified 10 essential system-building standards that are designed to ensure institutional equity. Each standard has specific indicators to help educators improve the total educational system. The 10 standards are:

- 1 Educational environments are created that honor diversity and respect the individual.
- 2 Educational leaders assure equity in governance.
- 3 Preservice and inservice education equips faculty, administrators and staff with the skills needed to teach and work with diverse student populations and communities.
- 4 Fair and impartial teaching practices are incorporated into classrooms to facilitate the academic achievement of all students.
- 5 Fair and impartial assessment practices are incorporated into classrooms and



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testing programs.

- 6 Curricula and personnel are evaluated to ensure that issues of equity and diversity are consistently addressed.
- 7 Data on student achievement and programs is collected and evaluated to ensure that all groups benefit from educational practices and policies.
- 8 The entire learning curriculum is available to all students through comprehensive, individualized planning and course selection.
- 9 Financial resources, facilities and staffing are allocated in ways that provide opportunity and success for all students.
- 10 Parents/caregivers, community organizations, business/industry, and schools work together as partners to promote academic achievement and inclusive learning environments.

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These standards can help high schools and community colleges build a base upon which specific action steps can be taken to improve the institution's ability to respond to the many needs of the students and create an institutional climate that supports the success of every student.

Help from Professional Resources

In addition to building institutional capacity to support equity in career and technical education, we must also focus individual efforts on building professional capacity to implement programs and strategies in our own spheres of influence.

One resource available to you as a member of ACTE is the Career and Technical Education Equity Council (CTEEC), an affiliate of the ACTE Administration Division. As an ACTE member, you are eligible to become a member of CTEEC and participate fully in all its activities. CTEEC members build leadership skills by participating on CTEEC committees, representing CTEEC on various ACTE committees, and by serving as a CTEEC officer.

As you continue to build your armament of tools, resources and skills to help you address the needs of every student you work with, take advantage of those made available through your professional association and other organizations that share your commitment to equity.

Surround yourself with other professionals who share similar goals and values, and work together, as ACTE urges in *Reinventing the American High School for the 21st Century*, to "make needed changes in school culture, instructional strategies and organizational priorities" from an equity perspective. **I**

Equity Resources

For more information on CTEEC, visit www.acteonline.org/about/division/cteec.cfm.

The ACTE position paper, *Reinventing the American High School for the 21st Century*, is available at www.acteonline.org/policy/legislative_issues/high_school_reform.cfm.

For more information on the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, visit www.napequity.org.

System-Building Standards for Educational Reform: An Equity Perspective is available at www.napequity.org/pdf/standards.pdf.