

HOW TO ACHIEVE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Fields, Howard. How to Achieve Educational Equity (Middletown, Delaware: self-published

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The author, Howard Fields, is a man on the move who will undoubtedly be a superintendent in the next seven years. My first recognition of his potential came at the Kappa Delta Pi 2023 St. Louis conference where he was one of the keynote speakers. He was the 2020 National Elementary Distinguished Principal from Missouri. This latter honor was primarily based upon increasing his elementary school's Annual Performance Report by 200 percent, thus demonstrating the ability to "walk the talk."

In 2020 Dr. Fields co-founded Black Males in Education/St. Louis and co-founded the inaugural State of Black Educators Symposium. He currently serves as assistant superintendent of human resources for the Kirkwood School District in Missouri. To fill out his completeness as a professional, he has published in several national education publications and given state and national presentations.

While the author admits there are numerous definitions of educational equity, he believes "Educational equity should be defined as creating and/or eliminating policies, systems and practices in schools that impact the experience outcomes and access to resources for students from previously excluded groups" (p 5).

When the author moved from River Gardens High to Mehlville High in another district, he became fully aware of the differences in resources. He went from attending a predominantly Black school to one with a small number of Black students. He also learned from other transitions and outside events such as the "Ferguson Unrest" caused by the death of Michael Brown, Jr.. In another significant movement the author went from a school spending \$5020 per student to one spending \$12,489. The later does not include the extra funds raised by parents. Being employed in different situations have advanced his understanding and appreciation of equity issues.

This book does not suggest that adding a diversity/equity officer will resolve all problems, although it is a common prescription. "Educational equity is action – unapologetically creating and/or eliminating policies, systems and practices" (p.29).



The author offers a series of action steps which have the potential of moving a district, school, or department closer to equity. Yet, he is a realist. “Based on my experience, most equity efforts are nonexistent, hidden within documents on the website and main office or surface superficial” (p.45).

In what some would consider a harsh statement, the author is against what he considers “trash equity.” “If your equity/efforts/solutions are not quantifiable, focused on systemic shifts, adequately funded and supported, and focused on removing barriers associated with previously identified inequities, throw it away, it’s trash!” (p.47)

While *How to Achieve Educational Equity* is a simple inspirational read, it can be criticized for not being concrete enough in terms of data or actions. The advice of this reviewer is for Dr. Fields to incorporate more data and specific responses in future writings to give his readers something to grab onto on their wild ride to realizing educational equity.

Reviewer: Art Stellar, Ph.D. has been a superintendent for 25 years and has held a variety of other positions in both nonprofit and for-profit educational organizations. Everywhere he has worked student achievement has made exceptional advances along with reductions in ALL equity gaps among all grades, all schools, and all student subgroups. His professional service includes president of ASCD, the Horace Mann League and other roles for educational organizations. He can be reached at artstellar@yahoo.com.