### CRITICAL RACE THEORY IN THE CLASSROOM

Good Morning, Chairperson Williams and committee members. Thank you for the time allowed to voice my concerns today.

Angry parents are being accused of terrorizing school boards across the country about "CRT." I am not that parent, but I am getting weary of watching them be talked down to and told that Critical Race Theory is not the same as educational equity. Although unable to name it by its correct philosophical or legal terminology, parents know something problematic is going on in public schools. Most are busy trying to put food on the table and pay their ever-increasing property taxes and haven't made time to brush up on "complex graduate-level legal theory."

It is supposed to be a contract. We accept our collective obligation to fund the education of the community's children. In turn, we entrust our children to the care and instruction of qualified educators.

Our family moved to Kansas City in 2017. We chose Shawnee Mission because of the district's reputation for academic excellence. Instead, we found a school district less focused on academic pursuits and relentlessly concerned with social engineering and activism.

The problem is a Critical Social Justice world view and the role of educator as activist, infusing Critical Theory in all forms into pedagogy. It is an "awakened consciousness" to the struggles of

oppressed identity groups and a worldview that invokes a call to activism in the classroom and beyond. Diversity, equity, and inclusion; Social-Emotional learning; and sexualization and grooming of children.

This theory looks for injustice everywhere and assigns a duty to fight it and insists that others do too. It is a recipe for dissatisfaction that leads to nihilism, and it is now relentlessly focused on our children.

### How does this happen?

Schools of Education have bought into the idea of "Maslow before Bloom," meaning kids must feel safe and welcome and have a sense of belonging before they can learn. By definition, academic achievement has been put in the back seat. Administrators will claim that the hierarchy of needs includes diversity, equity, and inclusion. To that end, our district spent almost 1 million dollars on the Deep Equity program, which is now mandatory training for all staff.

Our district condescendingly tells us that Deep Equity is about teachers having cultural competence and teaching honest history. These are the stated goals of Deep Equity, phase 3 (We Can't Lead... p85):

- Exploring issues of privilege and power.
- Understanding the dynamics of social dominance.
- Linking issues of dominance to current educational inequities.

• Creating strategies for moving from dominance to social justice.

The purpose of the Deep Equity training is to "hone your skills as facilitators and change agents among your peers (We Can't Lead...Intro, ix)"

This is cultural competence and honest history?

Our district will begin training students in the Youth Equity Stewardship program in Spring 2022. According to Wade Colwell-Sandoval, co-creator of the program, "the kids are a captive audience." Per their own literature, the YES program is "designed to prepare middle and high school youth along with adult advocates from across a district to be *powerful change agents* in building inclusive, inspired school climates...The youth can then contribute to larger equity work by gaining a *critical lens* for recognizing and eliminating educational disparities."

The YES program just formalizes what is already happening. In just four years in the district, my child has been encouraged to walk out of school in protest on four different occasions by instructors and peers. She felt pressure to leave school grounds because she didn't want her teacher to assume she supports gun violence. She was 12 years old. Next was the union negotiation with the school board, then Black Lives Matter, then sexual assault.

Are these ideas getting into the classroom? The better question is how would they not?

Under the guise of social emotional learning, students are being relentlessly surveyed to gauge attitudes and feelings. Parents received an email asking to survey before and after Second-Step lessons. When I asked my child about Second Step, she responded "that's the thing that's making all my friends obsessed with their gender expression; you can't even talk to them anymore without them getting mad because of pronouns." Second-Step is a discussion-based program led by a teacher that includes prompts for "sensitive topics," such as identity, bullying, sexuality, and race.

On November 2, I was told by my 12-year-old that a substitute school counselor pulled her from class and discussed meeting with her once per week, a so-called "intervention," without our knowledge or consent, based on a survey that we had opted her out of but was administered anyway.

The timing of these discussions and interventions suggests that long-accepted psychosocial and developmental psychology is taking a secondary role to the hierarchy of needs. Do we know if the social-emotional interventions at this specific time are having unintended consequences? Alternatively, is that the goal? Either way, I submit this is *my lane* as a parent. I suspect the goal is to attack and dismantle ideas of oppressive binaries, norms, hierarchy, and merit.

If the instructors have embraced this worldview, and Shawnee Mission now requires that they do, theory must become praxis.

On the first day of class 2020, a 10th grade English teacher at Shawnee Mission Northwest brought up for discussion the topic of the shooting of Jacob Blake and "Kenosha shooter," Kyle Rittenhouse. After 10 minutes of rant, she instructed one student that he needed to get better sources because she had facts and he was reciting right wing talking points. Her "facts" have turned out to be incorrect. That same semester, in a virtual class, a girl had turned off her camera in tears because she expressed uncertainty about the BLM movement and she "got dragged" by her peers. My daughter was concerned for this girl's wellbeing. What she said to me was: "We all know, you can think it, but you better not say it."

There is a popular saying among teachers: "They will forget what you said, but they won't forget how you made them feel." Ask yourselves how the students I just described were made to feel. I would ask the DEI proponents, how is this a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every student?

I can show you lessons that my kids have done, one of which is straight out of the Deep Equity handbook (see attachment), but the issue goes deeper. My concern is that they are causing chaos in the minds of our kids and directly and purposefully challenging the values we are teaching at home. In a time when mental health issues have become ubiquitous among young people, do we really want to teach them that their parents are implicitly unconsciously racist and responsible for oppressive systems, which they are now obligated to tear down?

I would like to add that in our family, we profess Christ and His love. If we are to truly be Christ followers, then we must resist and do away with the practice of using ideas of race, sex, gender preference, and any other "identity" to divide, separate, unite, or incite His children. Anywhere this is occurring is abusive to children and in direct conflict with our values. Our children are empowered by their identity in Christ, in whom they can do all things and for whom they love all people because God so loved the world.

I suspect there are teachers who may object to my worldview. I would not bring it into a public school classroom. I would ask for the same consideration from teachers and administrators when it comes to my children. When you break the children, it will be the parents who pick up the pieces.

### **NOTES AND RESOURCES**

### Statement from KSDE regarding Critical Race Theory:

https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Special-Education-and-Title-Services/Social Emotional Growth?TSPD 101 R0=0812b43512ab 2000004c4eab2e060b3734e10a3091e248ccbac28ddbd7392005b2ee34 607a028d2008c4b61049143000fd3a290aa1bb4456828ab9a13408fea4 a4dfec61217ddd5650301332883febb4cf1dbddca283e95922569a734f f7072b

## Kansans Can: Social-Emotional learning, necessity and management.

https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/CSAS/Content%20Area%20(M-Z)/School%20Counseling/Soc Emot Char Dev/Measuring%20SE G%20Locally%20010121.pdf

### Deep Equity Facilitator Handbook, sources for handouts:

Howard, G. R. (2014). We Can't Lead Where We Won't Go: An Educator's Guide to Equity (1st ed.). Corwin.

## Shawnee Mission School Board - regarding use of Panorama for surveillance and data collection regarding social-emotional learning:

https://go.boarddocs.com/ks/smsd/Board.nsf/files/BZZN795E0B0 E/\$file/CARES\_ESSER%20Presentation%20(April%2012%2C%202 021%20BOE).pdf

## Kansas State Department of Education DEI statement and metrics (safety requires equity):

https://www.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=eWNQUMmFHs o%3d&tabid=1478&portalid=0&mid=5574&TSPD 101 R0=0812b4 3512ab2000ea251a187d31eeb1aa7ee21ccb560231e81cbce0fada2563 68a0f6668af66fbc08530ff3b0143000bb25dc74ed331b152786596c0d7 5b4f6bbd88ede1304d2835acb672f950a45314b70318eed61e5af3f447 b9803365f8a

### Kansas State Department of Education, Measuring Social-Emotional Growth:

https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/CSAS/Content%20Area%20(M-Z)/School%20Counseling/Soc Emot Char Dev/Measuring%20SE G%20Locally%20010121.pdf

https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Special-Education-and-Title-

<u>Services/Social Emotional Growth?TSPD 101 R0=0812b43512ab 2000004c4eab2e060b3734e10a3091e248ccbac28ddbd7392005b2ee34 607a028d2008c4b61049143000fd3a290aa1bb4456828ab9a13408fea4 a4dfec61217ddd5650301332883febb4cf1dbddca283e95922569a734f f7072b</u>

## Social Emotional Growth as an emerging occupation, per CASEL:

https://www.panoramaed.com/blog/7-social-emotional-learning-jobs-to-hire-for-this-

year#:~:text=SEL%20Specialist%20or%20SEL%20Coordinator&tex t=This%20person%20helps%20to%20create,emotional%20develop ment%20and%20well%2Dbeing.

### Maslow before Bloom:

https://www.edutopia.org/video/science-learning-and-development

https://www.ednc.org/perspective-learning-in-the-time-of-covid-maslow-before-bloom/

https://medium.com/inspired-ideas-prek-12/we-have-to-maslow-before-we-can-bloom-36cd78dc22a0

https://publications.ieu.asn.au/2020-june-ie/articles3/maslow-bloom/

Kansas Office of Revisor of Statutes regarding parents rights in education:

https://www.ksrevisor.org/statutes/chapters/ch38/038\_001\_0041.html

Gary Howard, on educational equity

https://cdnprincipals.com/leading-for-systemic-equity/

Guide book and description of Youth equity Stewardship program:

See attached PDF (YES Program Info)

Shawnee Mission School District OVT report - Spring 2020 - focus on social-emotional learning, YES program, Second Step: <a href="https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1603986120/smsdorg/thfdtjukksk1qurky9ov/ShawneeMissionSchoolDistrictOVTReportSpring2020.pdf">https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1603986120/smsdorg/thfdtjukksk1qurky9ov/ShawneeMissionSchoolDistrictOVTReportSpring2020.pdf</a>

YES Program training dates:

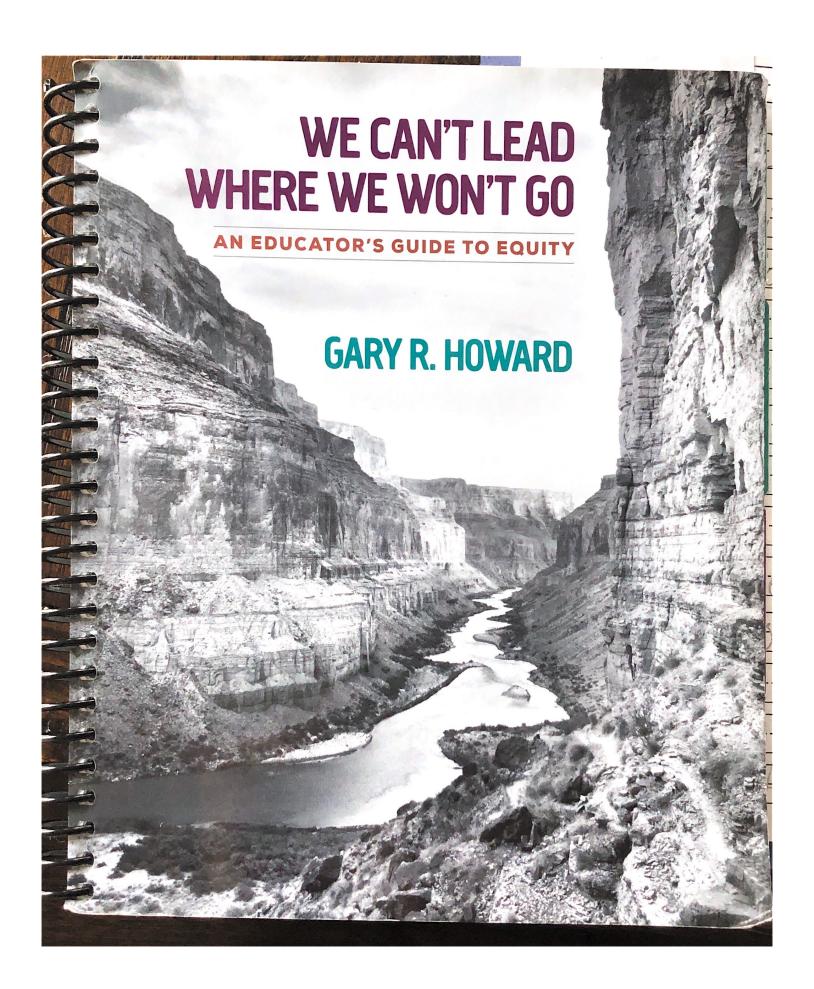
https://go.boarddocs.com/ks/smsd/Board.nsf/public#

Clips from YES (formerly New Wilderness Project) with Wade Sandoval interview, student voices:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEYqgmltbCI

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERzb8jCDn8Y

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YMTlk5jrFI





## I Am From Sample Poem

I am from platanos and sugar canes in the mountains I am from coffee beans roasting in the morning I am from sandy beaches and clear paradise I am from freestyle battles in the corners I am from double dutch on a warm afternoon I am from rice and beans the chewy steak on Sunday nights Yuca and salami when the sun is at it's highest I am from the palo drums, the guitar's song in bachata, the beat boxing and struggle I am from tios and tias from centuries of Spanish-speaking culture from endless rivers of family I am from baggy clothes and shorts I am from years of tambora and guira playing from hips that move like the waves of the Caribbean I am the Dominican Republic I am New York

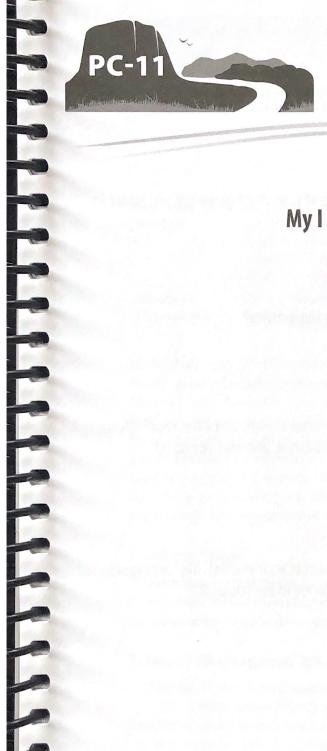
I am Karen

For more ideas about I Am From Poems and other strategies for bringing students' lives into the classroom, see Linda Christensen's book, Reading Writing and Rising Up: Teaching about Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word (available from Rethinking Schools).



### I Am From Reflections

- What similarities and differences among the members of your small group did you notice in your discussion of the I Am From poems?
  - What did you learn about race and culture from this activity?
    - How do the different elements in your personal culture and I Am From inform / influence / motivate the work you do, how you do it, and why you do it?
  - How do the many different I Am From experiences of your students and colleagues impact their journeys toward inclusion and success in our schools?



## Blank I Am From Writing Page

**My I Am From Poem** 

Name





Teaching and Leading for Inclusion, Equity, and Excellence



### GIVEN ALL OF OUR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY:

Why so long?

What's in the way?

What will it take?



### Inclusion:

Students and employees feel welcomed, seen, respected, understood, cared for, and safe.

### **Equity:**

Educational disparities based on race, economics, and other dimensions of difference are reduced and eliminated. Positive school outcomes are distributed equitably across all demographic and identity groups. Negative outcomes are reduced for all groups.

### **Excellence:**

We keep the bar high in all we do. We educate students for life and for reflective citizenship. We empower students and employees in the preservation of their identity and culture. Substance, depth, and critical thinking are more important than either compliance or test scores.



### **Phase One: Tone and Trust**

- Forming a community of engaged adult learners
- Building a climate of constructive collaboration
- Overcoming past resistance to "diversity" work
- Transcending the rhetoric of shame and blame

### **Phase Two: Personal Culture and Personal Journey**

- Acknowledging each person's unique cultural narrative
- Providing a functional definition of cultural competence
- Clarifying the process of growth toward cultural competence
- Connecting adult cultural competence with student outcomes

### Phase Three: From Social Dominance to Social Justice

- Exploring issues of privilege, power, and difference
- Understanding the dynamics of social dominance
- Linking issues of dominance to current educational inequities
- Creating strategies for moving from dominance to social justice

### Phase Four: Classroom Implications and Applications

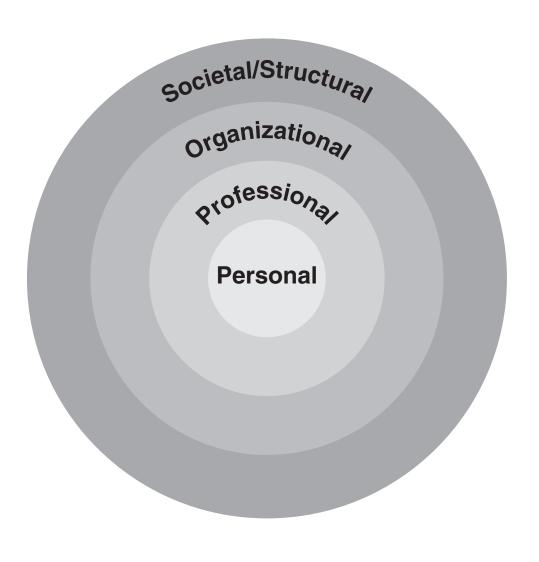
- Reinforcing adult—student relationships as the key to achievement
- Acknowledging classroom successes, challenges, and roadblocks
- Applying the Seven Principles for Culturally Responsive Teaching
- Implementing action research for inclusion and equity

### Phase Five: Systemic Transformation and Planning for Change

- Identifying organizational barriers to equity and inclusion
- Applying a three-stage model for organizational transformation
- Creating a holistic integrated approach to school improvement
- Assessing outcomes related to the professional development process

For a discussion of this work in actual school settings, see Gary Howard's article, *As Diversity Grows, So Must We,* in the Selected Articles section of the manual.







Race / Ethnicity	Religion / Spirituality
Language	Life Value
Vocation	Possession



Which lens of difference has been the greatest challenge for you in your life?

Age	Gender	Race
Religion	Economics	Language
Disability	Culture	Accent
Values	Role/Position	Status
Appearance	Education Level	Body Size
Personality	Sexual Orientation	Politics
Learning Styles	Family Background	Other?

1. Share a story from your own experience that illustrates how one of these dimensions of difference has created a challenge for you.

or

- 2. In what ways do you see students or adults in your school experiencing challenges related to their lenses of difference?
- 3. Are there other lenses of difference you would like to add to this list?





# The will and the ability to form authentic and effective relationships across differences

### **Pair-and-Share Conversation:**

- 1. Share your responses to this definition of Cultural Competence.
- 2. In what ways were authentic relationship and Cultural Competence either missing or present in the Lenses of Difference challenges you discussed earlier?



The more culturally competent and culturally responsive we are as adults, the less our students have to play "give it up" in our schools.

The less pressure they feel not to be who they are, the more energy they have available to engage and learn.



### Tracking Deep Equity Outcomes

### Level 1: Shift in the tone and depth of adult conversations

More trust/more honesty
Take on difficult topics
Clearer leadership focus on equity

### Level 2: Improvement in the climate of inclusion for students

Increased belongingness/connectedness Reduced incidents of bullying and harassment More positive student-adult relationships Students empowered to speak their truth

### Level 3: Broad implementation of Culturally Responsive Practices

The 7 Principles of CRT are embedded Critical thinking about complex socio-political topics Support staff engaged in cultural competence work "Leading for Equity" guides all decisions

### Level 4: Significant reduction in educational disparities

Discipline and Special Education referrals Achievement levels Access to higher level courses Graduation and college attendance rates

### Deep Equity Key Components

Equity Leadership for Administrators
 One-day session for central office leaders and principals

School Teams CRT Facilitator Training
 Four non-consecutive days for school teams in year 1, two or three additional follow-up days in year 2

Systemic Multi-Year CRT PD in Buildings
 Led by principals and teacher leaders using Gary
 Howard's manual and videos

Youth Equity Stewardship: YES!
 Five non-consecutive days with teams of youth ambassadors from district high schools and/or middle schools

Evaluation Design
 Tracking professional growth and student outcome data

### **Cultural Competence and Courageous Practice: Working Together for Inclusion, Equity, and Excellence**

### **Some Suggested Personal Action Commitments**

- 1. Apply an equity and inclusion lens to everything I do.
- 2. Pay attention and complement the ways that my colleagues and students are breaking through cultural barriers in their personal relationships.
- 3. Create opportunities to talk with and get to know colleagues and students I don't usually interact with.
- 4. Look for examples of inclusion or exclusion happening in my classroom, school, and workplace.
- 5. Invite my colleagues and students to share their cultural background, experiences, stories, and diverse perspectives.
- 6. Listen to the concerns, struggles, and challenges that my colleagues and students are having related to equity and inclusion, and collaborate with them in finding solutions.
- 7. Invite parents and community members into the equity discussion, and include their points of view in the way I do my work.
- 8. Examine my curriculum materials for bias, stereotyping, or exclusion of diverse perspectives.
- 9. Challenge and re-examine some of the assumptions I make about people who are different from me.
- 10. Visit a cultural celebration or event that highlights one of the cultures that our students come from.
- 11. Speak up at work or in family gatherings when someone makes negative or stereotypical comments about a group of people.
- 12. Attend a religious service that is different from mine.
- 13. Hold myself accountable for continuing my own growth related to cultural competence.

Circle one of the above personal action commitments that you will work on over the next few months, or write your own action commitment here:

### Leadership for Systemic Equity: Working Together for Inclusion, Equity, and Excellence

### **Suggested Action Commitments**

- 1. Hold myself accountable for continuing my own growth related to cultural competence, culturally responsive practice, and equity leadership.
- 2. Apply an equity lens to every decision I make.
- 3. Put support structures and procedures in place to assure that my leadership team and my staff have access to ongoing quality professional development for Equity.
- 4. Align our Equity work with all other school district and building-based initiatives.
- 5. Position the Equity and Culturally Responsive Practice (CRP) work as an integrative strategy for all we do, rather than "one more thing" we have to do.
- 6. Build CRP indicators into all look-for and walk-through rubrics and instruments.
- 7. Include Equity and Culturally Responsive Practice indicators in all teacher evaluations.
- 8. Highlight the creative Equity strategies that staff members are using in their work.
- 9. Create opportunities for staff members to share their cultural background, experiences, stories, and diverse perspectives.
- 10. Listen to the concerns, struggles, and challenges my staff members are having related to the Equity work, and collaborate with them in finding solutions.
- 11. Build Equity outcomes and CRP into all School Improvement Plans.
- 12. Empower a team of Youth Equity Leaders as full partners in supporting adult Equity PD, engaging other students, and improving school climate.
- 13. Implement a comprehensive evaluation design to track outcomes and continually improve practices related to the Equity work.
- 14. Implement PD for Equity and Culturally Responsive Practice with all of my support staff.
- 15. Invite parents and the community into the Equity discussion, and include them in professional development activities.
- 16. Other leadership action commitments......

## **Leading for Equity**

Our primary leadership action commitments:

- Informing people about the educational disparities that exist in our schools.
- Igniting people with a sense of urgency and passion for the work.
- Inspiring our colleagues with a vision of the possible – We can do this.
- Modeling this vision in our own work.
- Supporting and Sustaining them in their work.



# YOUTH EQUITY STEWARDSHIP YES!

### Stewardship:

expands the notion of leadership to include actions that arise from the caring for our collective home and restoring the balance and integrity of our natural and cultural communities.

Stewardship is about having shared power among others rather than dominance over others. Stewards of youth equity see their accountability in the quality of their own educational experience and civic participation as well as in the academic success of others.

youthequitystewardship.com

(206) 909-7917



Youth Equity Stewardship Series

Presenters: Benjie Howard & Wade Antonio-Colwell

Format: Interactive Student Workshops, "Listen Up" Community Presentation, Strategy Planning

#### **Description:**

The Youth Equity Stewardship Series is up to five gatherings designed to prepare middle and high school youth along with adult advocates from across a district to be powerful change agents in building inclusive, inspired school climates. The content combines live musical performance, structured dialogue, creative expression activities, and experiential learning. The arts-based curriculum is designed to build deeper relationships and connections across the spectrum of identities including (but not limited to) culture, race, gender identity, ability, age, belief, economics, learning preferences and academic history. All participants engage with the YES! workbook for processing their ideas and insights as they move through phases of the Youth Equity Stewardship Series curriculum. The series concludes with a culminating "Listen Up" community presentation of youth voices, and is followed by a strategic planning session with teachers to transfer the learning from the series into existing school improvement efforts.

### "Listen Up" Community Engagement

After completion of the sessions, YES! participants join Wade and Benjie in a culminating performance onstage to share their experiences, their stories and their creative expression with peers, teachers, administrators, parents and community members. Listen Up is a multi-media collaboration combining youth voice, adult testimony, spoken word, movement, visual art gallery, video, and the original hip hop & folk music used in the five sessions from Wade & Benjie's album Borderless. The experience is an opportunity for the broader community to witness and learn from the participants, and for the participants to share their passion and their plans for taking real action in their school community. Listen Up also serves as a starting point for other teachers and administrators to join as advocates with the powerful youth equity stewards in multi-generational collaboration for the purpose of supporting positive change in their schools.

#### YES! Phases

- 1. Personal Culture / Personal Journey
- 2. Social Dominance to Social Justice
- 3. Creative Expression / Creative Resistance
- 4. Community Awareness/ Community Action
- 5. Stewardship in Motion/ "Listen Up" Community Engagement

#### **Intended Outcomes**

Shift in the tone and depth of youth and adult conversations

- New informed cross-cultural relationships
- Greater cultural awareness and empathy through stories
- · An empowered sense of leadership and positive influence

Improvement in the climate of inclusion for students

- · Students gain skills for active stewardship of inclusive climate
- More positive student-adult relationships
- · Students build soulful, inspired, brave, dialogue spaces

**Broad implementation of Equity Stewardship** 

- · Students present and lead professional development session
- Students lead dialogue and activities with peers and younger students
- · Equity Stewardship as part of school culture

Youth contribution to larger equity work

- Students gain a critical lens for recognizing and eliminating educational disparities
- Youth teams partner with adult Equity teams at building level
- · Youth perspective informs shifts in educational practice

youthequitystewardship.com (206) 909-7917