

# EQUITY VALUES FOR YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP AND WORK BASED LEARNING

It is essential to ground our work in equity values as we create programs, policies, and structures to support youth apprenticeship and work based learning. These values provide a starting framework to ground the creation of this programming by centering and serving the most vulnerable youth in our communities. These can be utilized and adapted to support current work teams are doing to acknowledge inequities embedded in education and workforce systems while implementing programmatic design interventions, policy changes, and systems-change activities that advance our goals for equity.

## COMMUNITY AS EXPERTS

Community members are experts of their own realities and are an integral part of the solution; community voice should not be treated as an afterthought and historically oppressed populations should be centered in all community engagement efforts. Youth and families from historically oppressed groups should not be tokenized in community engagement processes; this is a harmful practice and perpetuates cycles of oppression for these groups.

## YOUTH VOICE

Youth are the best sources of information for how they are impacted by and interact with their community. Providing ample space for youth voices to be elevated is imperative to their success in and outside of the classroom; we are charged with the responsibility of creating a sense of belonging where youth feel safe to share. It is also our duty to center youth with historically oppressed identities in all youth voice efforts and to intentionally integrate their ideas and feedback into our classrooms and industries.

## INTERSECTIONALITY

The intersecting identities of youth, teachers, families, and their communities should be celebrated in the classroom. There also needs to be a clear commitment to mitigating the intersecting structures and systems of oppression youth face when educators are engaging with them and their families. Educators should see youth as whole beings and should actively adopt an asset orientation to their interactions with young people. This requires courageous conversations between staff members within institutions and between educators, youth, and families in the classroom.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

There is often a negative, and sometimes violent, history between non-white youth and families and the current education system. The broken trust between communities and many school systems requires all educators, administrators, and policy makers to adopt an equity lens and anti-oppressive practice to their work. Institutionalized, or formalized and mandated systems and structures, within schools can cause teachers and administrators to loath and be annoyed by parent involvement. We must support teachers and administrators with the tools they need to effectively engage and learn from their communities. This process requires an understanding of historical context. Without this, educators and administrators will perpetuate the same patterns of harm with youth and families, albeit often unintentional. Understanding historical context will also better prepare educators, administrators, and counselors with the ability to speak knowledgeably and compassionately about the benefits of pursuing a career and technical education with youth and families who are new to the conversation.

## CHANGE AGENTS

Educators, administrators, and policy makers dedicated to educational equity must become change agents in their institutions and communities. This can be accomplished through many methods - we recommend pulling on individual strengths to see where expertise can be exercised. This could look like helping with equitable recruitment efforts or advocating for the appropriate tracking of youth data to help inform equity initiatives in schools and communities. Independent of the focus area, it is important to always work towards goals in a way that benefits the collective with a specific focus on our most vulnerable youth.