EDUCATION ELEMENTS BELIEF ON EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

At Education Elements, we partner with districts and schools to design equitable learning environments that meet the needs of every student. We believe that schools grow when people grow. Our theory of change is that by developing educators and other adults, we can equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to transform our schools to create equitable experiences for students. We see equity as a choice–a choice that individuals and collective communities make to put students' individual and unique needs first.

We work to achieve educational equity by supporting districts to recognize and dismantle barriers that disproportionately and negatively impact specific groups of people including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; people with disabilities; immigrants and non-native English speakers; and people experiencing poverty. This recognition is pivotal in our approach to our work with school communities as we help them examine their beliefs alongside their practices. We work in partnership with schools to uncover their communities' needs and make decisions aligned to those needs.

We seek to understand the culture and context of each district and school. Therefore, we support in examining current structures, practices, and policies, and offer an approach that honors the distinct and individual needs of a district's community. We believe making conscious and continuous effort to center the following guiding principles[1] will help us advance towards educational equity.

Guiding Principle	What this means	What this can look like in practice
Leading with an Empathetic Approach	*Accepting, trusting, and believing in different narratives of an experience that is resulting in inequitable outcomes, especially across lines of difference*	- There is a wide variety of perspectives represented in conversations - Intentional space is created for stories to be shared and celebrated so all members of the school community can begin to understand each other's experiences - People are encouraged to work through healthy conflict and share grievances without fear of repercussions - Race, and its intersectionality with other identities, is acknowledged and talked about, not ignored - There is an acknowledgment of the systems and structures that have created race, and racism that ultimately create negative outcomes for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)
Acknowledging Representation Matters	*Perspectives shared are representative of the school community, especially those who have been historically excluded*	- There is a regular practice of reflecting on - Who is represented in spaces of decision making? - Whose perspective is missing? - How might we distribute decision making power? - Who is the most impacted by decisions being made? - Barriers to participation are actively considered and removed - There is an understanding that experiences shared are not representative of that

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[1] *Guiding principles are built on the understanding that leaders and participants have engaged in and continue to engage in self reflection and learning around diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging*

		• individual's identity group (tokenism) • There is diverse representation among staff at all levels, including but not limited to age, race, gender, sexuality, and disability status
Cultivating Brave Spaces	*Members of the school community are able to hold space for one another and are willing to discuss difficult or challenging topics that may feel uncomfortable*	• Members of the school community engage in difficult or challenging conversations that center topics including race and its intersection with other identities, diversity, equity, and inclusion to create environments that promote belonging • There is regular prioritization of time for self reflection and examination of biases and beliefs • People listen to understand versus listening to be understood • There is creation of spaces that are psychologically safe, but allow for people to challenge and deepen their thinking
Maintaining Accessible Resources	*Resources are accessible and allocated to those who need them*	• Members of the school community know what resources are available, how to access them, and how to ask for help if they need or want it • Resources are updated and talked about publicly and distributed equitably not equally[2] • Barriers to accessibility are removed to ensure access for everyone, particularly those with a disability (*link visual accessibility standards*) • Staff, students, and families help decide where resources go and how they are used
Implementing Responsive Communication	*Communication is frequent and responsive to the needs of all members of the school community*	• Communication is translated in all languages that are spoken or used within the school community • Communication is clear, kind, and frequent • All members of the school community can name various channels in which they can give and receive feedback and communication
Distributing Power	*Power and decision-making authority are distributed among a variety of perspectives, experiences, and identities*	• There is a distributed approach to making decisions vs. a top down approach • There are opportunities for members of school community[3], especially students, to take on leadership positions and give feedback • Decision making stems from a communal approach where the school community needs are centered

[2] *Equal means everyone gets the same resources; equity means resources are distributed based on need*
[3] *Members of the school community are defined as students, staff, families, district and school leaders, board members, and community members*