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Equity Perspectives:
Creating Space for Making Meaning on Equity Issues

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Below are a set of perspectives or assumptions that have important implications for schools and communities. These perspectives provide the opportunity to dialogue and build shared meaning on the beliefs, values and assumptions that generally are not discussed in schools or other public spaces. **Note**: It is very helpful to use constructivist listening dyads as a structure to help support a discussion of the equity perspectives.

1. No one is born prejudiced. All forms of bias, from extreme bigotry to unaware cultural bias, are acquired, actually imposed, on a young person.

2. We are all one species. All humans are very much alike.

3. In many societies, many of the assumptions, values and practices of people and institutions of the dominant culture serve to disadvantage students from the non-dominant culture.

4. Individual prejudice and institutionalized biases are dysfunctional for individuals and to the society as a whole.

5. Systematic mistreatment (such as racism, prejudice against people with disabilities, classism, or sexism) is more than the sum of individual prejudices. Thoughtful action with regard to curriculum, pedagogy, school policies and school organization is necessary to overcome the effects on people and institutions with a long history of prejudice and discrimination.

6. Individuals and groups internalize and transfer the systematic mistreatment. They often act harmfully toward themselves and each other. This process must be identified and eliminated.

7. Educators are an important force in helping many people overcome the effects of societal bias and discrimination, but educational institutions also serve to perpetuate the inequalities and prejudices in society.

8. Race, class, perceived ability, and gender bias are serious issues facing U.S. society and education. Unfortunately, they are issues that are usually not discussed. Talking about them is necessary, not to lay blame, but to figure out better ways of educating our students.

9. Lack of acceptance and support is an impediment to the development of educational leadership among people of color, women, and the working class.

10. To make progress on this very complex problem it will be necessary to improve alliances between educators from different ethnic and racial groups, between males and females, between those with disabilities and those without, and between people of different class backgrounds.

11. Discussing and gaining new understandings about the existence and effects of bias and discrimination will usually be accompanied by strong emotions.

12. Changed attitudes and actions will be facilitated if we are listened to attentively and allowed to release our emotions as we attempt to make sense of our experiences and the experiences of others.