

## Coaching with an Equity Lens

Educational equity means that every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background, and/or family income (CCSSO, 2017).

In nearly every measurable area, (i.e. academic achievement, discipline practices, gifted and talented placement, and graduation rates) across all ages and grades, Wisconsin's education system has yielded persistent inequitable outcomes for learners along demographic lines. In particular, learners of color, students with IEPs, students identified as English learners, and learners eligible for free and reduced lunch have experienced significantly lower rates of success than their white peers.

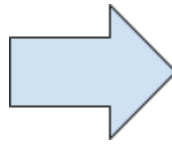
Achieving equity in Wisconsin schools demands a bold commitment to deliberately address these unacceptable outcomes.

An intentional focus on equity accounts for and adapts to the diversity of learners and families served by Wisconsin schools. To become equitable, schools and educators engage in a journey of deep and honest examination of who they are, their beliefs and assumptions about the learners and families they serve, and what they value and affirm.

The complex work of improving outcomes for all and eliminating inequities depends on authentic dialogue and learning and planning among learners, staff, families and the community. As explained in Figure 1, coaches are uniquely situated to facilitate this deep equity-focused dialogue, professional learning, and collaboration by entering into partnerships with stakeholders. In a partnership the coach engages in collaboration for learner success by supporting people to achieve their goals through careful listening and guidance instead of telling them what they need to know or do.

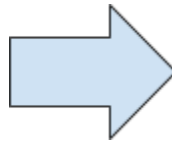
**Figure 1. How coaching furthers educational equity**

Creating and refining an equitable system is a continuous process.



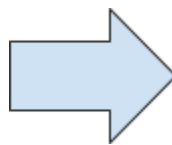
Because of its ongoing and job-embedded nature, coaching provides unbroken support for this process.

Reform will happen through educators sharing diverse perspectives and expertise about root causes contributing to inequitable outcomes.



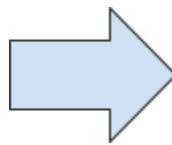
Coaching supports individuals and teams to understand their role in creating and reforming the system, planning action, implementing change, studying results, and refining action.

Equity is realized - in part - through collaboration around high quality, evidence-based instructional practices and strategic use of data to plan for improved student outcomes.

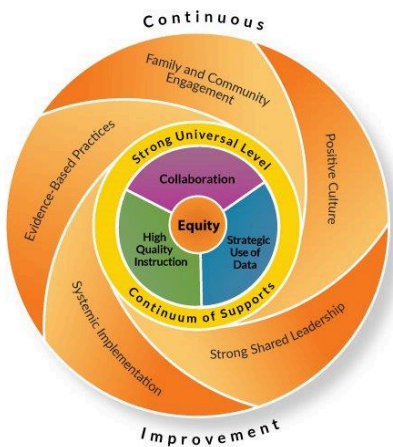


Coaches can use questioning, paraphrasing, and summarizing to continually focus conversation and collaboration on equity.

Teams need professional learning and practice in working together effectively toward equity.



Coaches can support teams in developing culturally responsive ways of collaborating to meet student needs.



A coach’s work - like all educators - is done within an equitable multi-level system of support. For Wisconsin schools and districts, implementing an equitable multi-level system of supports means providing equitable services, practices, and resources to every learner based upon responsiveness to effective instruction and intervention. In this system, high quality instruction, strategic use of data, and collaboration interact within a continuum of supports to facilitate learner success.

Collaborative teams use a range of data to match learner needs with evidence-based supports, monitor learner progress, and adjust the intensity and nature of support accordingly. Implementing equitable multi-level systems of supports can help PK-12 schools and districts across the state realize their mission to ready every learner for college and career success. Visit <https://dpi.wi.gov/rti> for more information about Wisconsin’s Framework for Equitable Multi-Level System of Supports.

## What Does this Mean for Coaches?

"Coaches are in a unique position to influence teachers and administrators, to interrupt inequitable practices, to engage them in safe, reflective, transformational conversations that shift beliefs and ways of being." --Elena Aguilar

Just as equity is at the center of Wisconsin's Framework for Equitable Multi-Level Systems of Supports, equity is also at the center of the work of coaches.

Wisconsin's Core Competency Practice Profile for coaches states that a,

"coach applies their knowledge of culturally sustaining pedagogy by actively naming and standing up to oppression and engaging in conversations with others about it" (Core Competency 7).

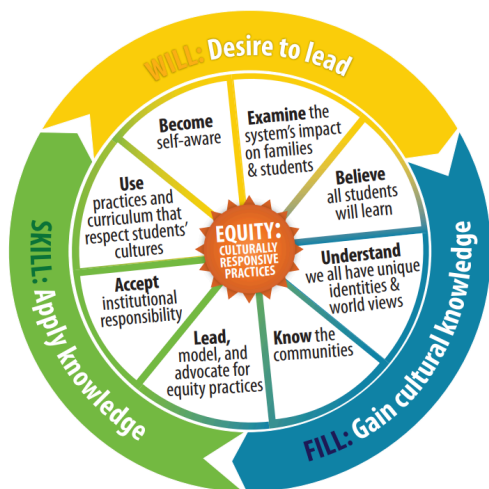
Coaches must adjust to a variety of content and clientele, but no matter the situation they should bring a lens of equity to every interaction.

Everything that a coach does is done with the ultimate goal of creating change that leads to equitable outcomes for all students. Coaches apply an equity lens in every conversation and interaction. Coaches generally operate within a continuum: at the far left is directive coaching where the coach tells the client what to do versus transformational to the far right where the coach mediates the learning process. However, if done through directive coaching, change in regard to equity may be superficial because the client is not authentically engaged in the journey.

For lasting and meaningful change, coach and client(s) can work together in transformational coaching. This empowers individuals and teams to examine and explore their values, beliefs, and mental models (or mind-sets) about underserved students, as well as the potential impact of these mental models on student outcomes.

The text, *Culturally Proficient Coaching*, states that in this type of transformational coaching, the coach must, "mediate a person's thinking toward values, beliefs, and behaviors that enable effective cross-cultural interactions to insure an equitable environment for learners, their parents and all members of the community" (Lindsey, D., p. 16). Since issues of gender, class, culture, and race may be accompanied by feelings of distrust and guilt, a coach must be confident and flexible when engaging in dialogue around these topics.

Wisconsin’s Model to Inform Culturally Responsive Practices, “describes the beliefs, knowledge, and practices Wisconsin educators, schools, and districts need to reach and teach diverse students within their culturally responsive multi-level systems of support.” The Model is a process in which every educator engages in their own personal and continuous journey between will, fill and skill.



**WILL:** The desire to lead and a commitment to achieving equitable outcomes for all students, **FILL:** Gaining cultural knowledge about ourselves and others, and **SKILL:** Applying knowledge and leading the change, skillfully putting beliefs and learning into action.

Within the model to inform a coach may partner with clientele no matter where they find themselves in the journey to become culturally responsive.

More information can be found at <https://www.wisconsinrticenter.org/reuseable-contents/culturally-responsive-practices.html>

The following table provides *some* concrete examples of coaching with an equity lens.

Coaching with an Equity Lens	Possible Actions
A coach continually strengthens self-awareness of how identity and culture affect who they are and how they interact with learners and families	Engage in reading, viewing, and listening about unconscious bias, colorblindness, and micromessages.
A coach supports staff in continually strengthening self-awareness	Facilitate the use of protocols which provide for safe environments to engage in courageous conversations. Ask questions that prompt a client to examine their own culture and how it shapes their actions. Protocols for equity work may be found in <i>The Power of Protocols: An Educators' Guide to Better Practice</i> .
A coach supports individual staff members and teams focus on equity by actively considering whether mismatches in systems, structures, policies, practices, values, and beliefs inhibit	Facilitate teams in the disaggregation of data, engage in root cause analysis and calculate risk ratios. Lead courageous conversations about disproportionality.

learner success and contribute to inequitable outcomes for underserved students.	
Coaches support staff in knowing and understanding their students and families, and in using evidence-based practices, curriculum and policies that respect the identities and cultures of learners and families served by schools.	Learn about the unique strengths and blend of identities that families bring to the school setting. Ask how staff are incorporating these strengths and identities into school practices, policies and curriculum.
Coaches, in partnerships with principals and other leaders, create positive school cultures, characterized by “an unwavering belief that all students can and will learn” (Du Four). In a positive culture, adults accept responsibility for learner success.	Collaboratively examine the assumptions and implicit biases that create barriers for historically marginalized students to fully access the learning environment.
Coaches and principals work together to lead, model, and advocate for equity.	Collaborate with leadership in the investigation of systems and problem solve for lasting change. Provide resources and support for ongoing professional learning focused on equity, such as a book study focused on anti-bias education and culturally responsive pedagogy.

**Resources**

It is important that a coach is as informed as possible in best practices regarding equity.

- Promoting Excellence for All eCourse (PEFA) and accompanying facilitation guide *Promoting Excellence for All* provides information and strategies successfully used by Wisconsin educators to raise achievement of students of color, closing the gap between them and their peers. These schools represent all grade levels, urban, rural, and suburban settings.
- Department of Public Instruction  
Links to coaching page, instructional coaching page, and coaching competencies
- Disproportionality Technical Assistance Network (The Network)  
The Network works with preK-12 educators, schools, districts, and other community partners to reduce racial disproportionality in special education through a multi-tiered

system of compliance activities and improvement supports. On their website you will find a variety of learning opportunities.

- Wisconsin Rtl Center  
The Rtl center offers a learning designed for school and district teams interested in addressing equity issues, developing cultural competence, exploring the relationship between power and privilege, and examining the subtleties within culture and diversity. Consider the CRP training or Coaching and Leadership.

#### Works Cited

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