

# ADVANCING EQUITY: A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLANNING TOOL

BY JILL HARRISON BERG AND SONIA CAUS GLEASON

The article “Come together for equity” on pp. 24-27 highlights the importance of engaging educators in examining beliefs, practices, and systems that support or hinder all students’ opportunities to learn. In the pages that follow, we present a tool that can help education leaders and professional learning specialists assess whether and how they are creating space for this work and brainstorm additional ways to prioritize it.

This tool is designed to help you think about both the content of professional learning (whether and how it addresses beliefs, practices, and systems) and the contexts (individual, team, or whole-school professional learning). Schools are often challenged to balance many contexts and needs for professional learning, and the challenge is especially acute when it comes to advancing equity because the process

requires ongoing inquiry into personal beliefs, a commitment to expanding one’s repertoire of professional practices, and constant collaboration to develop student-centered systems. It requires a strategic approach to professional learning.

To create and implement such an approach, we encourage you to consider each professional learning context and content area in turn. This tool has three separate sections focused on individual learning, team learning, and whole-school learning. Each provides space for considering beliefs, practices, and systems, including where your school’s opportunities stand now and how they can be improved moving forward.

After you complete the three sections, we encourage you to consider the reflection questions in Part 2 in order to compare across the three contexts and consider all of your efforts as a whole.

## PART 1: EXAMINING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CONTEXTS

### INDEPENDENT LEARNING CONTEXTS

Begin by considering professional learning opportunities that support educators' independent learning in your school. These might include goal-setting processes, coaching and modeling, peer observation, and many other strategies.

	<b>Equity extensions</b> What existing practices can you adjust to create more opportunities for individual educators to examine beliefs, actions, and systems?	<b>New possibilities</b> What additional opportunities could you create for individual educators?	<b>Potential challenges</b> What kinds of resistance are likely? How can you make a safe space to challenge existing practices?
BELIEFS about diversity and equity			
ACTIONS that support equity			
SYSTEM changes to increase equity			

### TEAM LEARNING CONTEXTS

Consider professional learning opportunities that support educators' team learning in your school. These might be grade-level or cross-grade team meetings, vertical content team meetings, leadership teams, lesson study, and other opportunities.

	<b>Equity extensions</b> What existing practices can you adjust to create more opportunities for teams to examine beliefs, actions, and systems?	<b>New possibilities</b> What additional opportunities could you create for teams?	<b>Potential challenges</b> What internal or external barriers challenge teams in doing this work? How can you address them?
BELIEFS about diversity and equity			
ACTIONS that support equity			
SYSTEM changes to increase equity			

## EXAMINING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CONTEXTS

### WHOLE-SCHOOL LEARNING CONTEXTS

Whole-school professional learning opportunities can also provide important opportunities for change. What practices exist in this context in your school? They might include regularly scheduled faculty meetings, school-based instructional rounds or learning walks, school partnership activities, or others.

	<b>Equity extensions</b> How do whole-school learning opportunities in your school shape educators' beliefs, actions, and systems? How can they prioritize equity more?	<b>New possibilities</b> What additional opportunities could you create?	<b>Potential challenges</b> What unique challenges do whole-school learning opportunities present? How can you prevent, overcome, or discuss them?
BELIEFS about diversity and equity			
ACTIONS that support equity			
SYSTEM changes to increase equity			

## PART 2: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After examining opportunities, possibilities, and challenges for incorporating an equity lens into professional learning, consider the following questions and discuss in small groups, in leadership team meetings, or other settings you use to move professional learning forward.

**Do educators have ample and adequate opportunities to explore necessary changes at all three levels — beliefs, actions, and systems?**

**Which types of professional learning — individual, team, or whole-school — provide the most opportunities for equity work? Should this balance be recalibrated going forward?**

**Looking across the three types of professional learning and three levels of change, what are the most commonly identified challenges? What strategies can you use to address them?**

**What will be your immediate next step in helping all educators in your school develop an equity lens?**