

DEI Newsletter Article

Diversity. Equity. Inclusion. These words and the opportunities they suggest are ever-present in today's society, and our PTA units are no different. As each of us commits to doing our part in 'DEI work,' we must understand what those words actually mean and how we can go beyond words to create action that will result in real lasting impacts.

Diversity speaks to the presence of differences (of identities, experiences, ideologies, etc.) within a given space. For some of us, diversity will naturally occur within our PTA memberships. For others, we will need to make contentious efforts to diversify our PTA and ensure representation reflecting the communities being served. To increase diversity, you might ask questions like: How do we get more diverse people to join? Why aren't people with differing identities joining? How can diversity be honored & celebrated in a way that goes beyond the superficial?

Diversity's Voice- A Middle Schooler

Hi!

I am heeeeeerrrrreeee!!!!

I'm over heeeeeerrrrreeee,
Sitting, eagerly, yet patiently on the shelf.

I see so many of you and I think that you see me.
But do you know what I am thinking?
Can I change where I am placed?
Do you ask me what I need?
Do you know who I am?

Or do you simply see my rainbow-laced Keds,
Swinging gallantly, at the southern-most tip
Of everything that is silent within me?

Equity recognizes that diversity we honor also creates advantages and barriers and, therefore, we are not all starting from the same playing field. Equity strives to ensure everyone, regardless of identity or background, has access to the same opportunities. It is a process through which systems much consistently be engaged to ensure all people have the opportunity to grow, contribute, and develop. It means those with fewer barriers and more advantages may, on paper, 'get less' while those with greater barriers and fewer advantages will 'get more' so that both can end up in the same final spot. To better focus on equity, you might ask questions like: What systemic barriers exist to joining PTA? How can we eliminate those barriers?

Equity's Voice- A 3rd Grader

Today, we all got markers for our assignment;
To draw the people at home who love us.

I like the color green,
But I know my family's faces are not green.

I tried to draw mi tía Carlita,
But the black marker
Did not put her together in the right way,
And the dark brown one was more like abuelita Chela.

I didn't know if I could do my homework
It made me feel sad
Until my teacher gave me a big box of crayons.

Now everyone looks right.

Inclusion, unlike diversity, requires action. It is in creating a space where all individuals feel a sense of belonging. If your PTA is inclusive, community members with different identities feel valued, welcomed, empowered, and leveraged. To better focus on inclusion, you might ask questions like: What is the experience for individuals who are underrepresented within PTA? What barriers have we unintentionally created that make people feel unwelcomed?

Inclusion's Voice- A High Schooler

Busting down the framework
To make sure that my voice
Is part of the song,
That sends us off
To the world of adults
Who make smart choices,
With a side of mistakes
And raised eyebrows.

And, still, I write my song
Because I know it will be heard!