2022 NSPRA National School Communication Awards
Publications and Digital Media Excellence Awards
Category — Excellence in Writing

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The article titled “How to change the narrative of educational equity” was shared on DoDEA Connects — the Department of Defense Education Activity’s internal news portal.
Kelisa Wing — professional development specialist, 2017 DoDEA Teacher of the Year, co-lead of DoDEA Race, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI), and an Equity Lab Nexus Fellows — shares her thoughts on teaching in a way that disrupts and dismantles disparate systems and creates equitable access for everyone to learn, achieve and succeed.

“I believe that now, more than ever, educators have a shared responsibility to hold themselves individually, and hold others mutually accountable to ensure that there are no barriers to race, equity, diversity and inclusion in our schools,” said Wing.

She shares a few ways in which we can all change the narrative:

- **Windows and mirrors.**

  When students have a mirror in their learning, it means that they can see themselves reflected in the curriculum. Maybe you are a science teacher, do your
female students see themselves represented in the images you place in front of them? Do you study people of various races, backgrounds and gender? Are you showing them that they matter in their learning?

When we give students a window, we allow them to see other people’s lived experiences that they would not normally see. We have to show students that Black people were more than enslaved people in history, that American Indians were more than removed people from the Trail of Tears, that the Asian American experience goes beyond internment camps and the “model citizen” stereotype, and differently-abled people need to be shown to our students as well.

Students need to learn that what makes us different is what is special about us and should not be feared but embraced.

- **Look inward.**

One of our norms in the REDI work is to notice our internal dialogue and reflect on the why. Have you examined your own thoughts, identity, and dimensions of diversity? When did you first begin to see differences? How do you decide what to teach, how to lead, when to speak up or speak out? Real equity work must begin within. When we understand and define ourselves, we are not driven by other people’s narrative about us, which leads to liberation.

- **Have a radical imagination for the future.**

Imagine a classroom where all students feel seen. Imagine a school where all employees, students, stakeholders and families feel seen and welcomed. Systems of oppression are by design, and if they are designed, they can be redesigned! We have that opportunity to do just that by speaking the future and planning for the future.

When it comes to teaching, Wing asks educators to consider these three questions:

1. Who cares if my students know how to make their subject and verbs agree if they use language to promulgate hate?
2. Who care if my students know the Pythagorean Theorem if they use numbers and statistics to minimize others?
3. Who cares if my students know the stories in their history book if they do not use the past to ensure that we create and equitable future?
Leigh Anne Kapiko Faulkner, principal at Tarawa Terrace Elementary School, agrees that these should be questions that educators ask themselves every day.

“It is about the intentional focus upon practice in both word and deed if we are to provide educational opportunities for all students…each day…each child,” said Faulkner. “At Tarawa Terrace Elementary, we will teach and honor the truths of our history — the difficult truths and the ones we can all celebrate. We will recognize that the stories of history are often bound by singular perspective and that the truth for change is only found as we learn to see the world through many lenses of historical perspective.”

Employees interested in participating in DoDEA REDI initiatives should email DoDEA.REDI@dodea.edu.