THE WORK OF COMMUNICATING EQUitably AT WORK

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Workforce Education Initiative Panel Discussion
Tuesday, January 15, 2019
IN THE U.S. WORKPLACE...

- White culture is dominant, invisible, and often unquestioned
- Many white people don’t realize:
  - They have a white identity
  - Racism is a system and not just individual acts of hate
  - This white-dominant system has advantaged their education, career, professional recognition, and quality of life
IN THE U.S. WORKPLACE...

- Competition is valued more than collaboration
- Hierarchical relationships are central
- Power/information hoarding is normalized
- Deviation from “Standard American English” diminishes the seriousness and/or value of what is being communicated
- There is fear of open conflict; direct and honest feedback is often sacrificed to “keep the peace”
All of this works against an equitable workplace.
All of this works against an equitable workplace.

So, what can I do about it?
As educators, we have developed particular skills that could be retooled to be useful in developing an equitable workplace.
TWO EXAMPLES

1. Valuing people by seeing them and listening across difference
2. Designing and leading productive meetings
1. SEEING PEOPLE AND COMMUNICATING VALUE

- What are some of the key problems that arise in the workplace in relationships and valuing others?
- What are some broader systemic patterns of whiteness and inequity that are reproduced in these dynamics?
HOW CAN THESE PATTERNS BE INTERRUPTED IN THE WAYS PEOPLE LISTEN AND ATTEND TO ONE ANOTHER AT WORK?
WHAT IS IN A NAME?

Names are . . .

- Personal and represent what we want to be called by others
- Important for acknowledging and respecting others
- A way of respecting identities
- Important for seeing and connecting people and what they do and say
People in the workplace

Adapted from TeachingWorks (teachingworks.org) high-leverage practice decomposition of eliciting and interpreting student thinking
Formulating questions designed to elicit and probe others’ experience and thinking

People in the workplace

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Listening to and interpreting what others say

People in the workplace

Formulating questions designed to elicit and probe others’ experience and thinking

Posing questions

Developing additional questions

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Listening to and interpreting what others say

People in the workplace

Formulating questions designed to elicit and probe others’ experience and thinking

Posing questions

Developing additional questions

Seeing what others experience, know, and can contribute

Adapted from TeachingWorks (teachingworks.org) high-leverage practice decomposition of eliciting and interpreting student thinking
DYAD ACTIVITY: LISTENING AND PROBING

Adapted from National Equity Project
PRACTICE IN SEEING AND HEARING PEOPLE AND COMMUNICATING VALUE

1. Get up. Stand face to face with one other person.
2. Each person will talk for 2 minutes uninterrupted.
3. Then you will have 2 minutes to consider one or two follow-up questions or probes to ask the person to clarify, learn more detail, or extend.
4. Each person will have 2 minutes to elicit more from their partner.
5. Reflection time.
IF YOU ARE WATCHING ONLINE AND DO NOT HAVE A PARTNER TO DO THIS WITH

- Follow the same activity structure, playing both roles.
PROMPT

What is one experience you have had at work that made you feel not heard and not valued?
REFLECT ON DYAD ACTIVITY

1. What did you hear?

2. How well did your follow-up questions work to help you learn more from your partner?

3. What did you learn about being heard and valued at work from your partner’s perspective?
2. DESIGNING AND RUNNING MEETINGS AT WORK

- What are some of the key problems you encounter in meetings?
- What are some broader systemic patterns of whiteness and inequity that are reproduced in meetings?
### HOW CAN THESE PATTERNS BE INTERRUPTED IN THE DESIGN AND CONDUCTING OF MEETINGS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Leading</th>
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</table>
| - Setting clear goals  
- Designing the activity, discussion, or task  
- Anticipating people’s thinking  
- Setting up the task | Framing - Launching  
Orchestrating - Eliciting - Orienting  
- Probing - Making contributions  
- Concluding |
| Seeing and disrupting patterns that reproduce inequity | Recording and representing ideas  
Maintaining a focus on the point |

Adapted from TeachingWorks (teachingworks.org) high-leverage practice decomposition of leading a discussion
PRACTICE IN DESIGNING MEETINGS

- Setting clear goals
- Designing the activity, discussion, or task
- Anticipating people’s thinking
- Setting up the task

- Work with two other people (or if watching online, do independently).

- Identify two questions or tasks for a meeting that:
  1. Are useful to work on synchronously in a group context.
  2. Take advantage of the expertise and experience of the people in the room.

- Frame how the questions or tasks could be posed productively to accomplish #1 and #2, and contrast with less useful framings.
**PRACTICE IN LEADING MEETINGS**

### Leading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orchestrating</th>
<th>Making contributions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Eliciting</td>
<td>- Probing</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Orienting</td>
<td>- Making</td>
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**Seeing and disrupting patterns that reproduce inequity**

### Moves to Elicit Participation ("Calling on" People)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move</th>
<th>When might you use this move?</th>
<th>What work do you need to do in advance to help make this move successful?</th>
<th>What are possible consequences of this move? (positive and negative)</th>
<th>What issues of equity are important to attend to with this move?</th>
<th>Other thoughts about this move</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer calling</td>
<td>Calling on volunteers with hands up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purposeful calling</td>
<td>Calling on people you know have interesting/relevant/useful ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cold calling</td>
<td>Calling on people who do not have their hands up</td>
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<td>Random calling</td>
<td>Using popsicle sticks or other random selection process</td>
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<td>Popcorn</td>
<td>Each person contributes in turn, going around the group</td>
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<td>Turn and talk</td>
<td>(sometimes called &quot;shoulder&quot; or &quot;elbow partners&quot;)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>People talk in pairs.</td>
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<td>Write on post-its or on charts</td>
<td>Each person writes on a sticky note or directly on poster(s) and then students do a gallery walk and see everyone's ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Call and response</td>
<td>(sometimes called &quot;choral response&quot;) Teacher asks question and all respond together.</td>
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<td>Group calling</td>
<td>Leader asks someone from a group to share out.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant calling</td>
<td>The person may start out calling on a student, but students are given some agency and responsibility to call on others.</td>
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<td>Group role</td>
<td>One person within a small group or partnership is designated as a reporter or speaker</td>
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What do I need to be able to do to support equitable communication?

- Listen and communicate across differences of age, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, language, social class, national origin, and disability status
- Listen with what you know, but also remain open to others’ ways of thinking and knowing
- These are high-leverage practices of communicating equitably at work and they take work to develop
Just as is teaching, communicating is about others!
CONNECTING TO AND INTERVENING ON THE “REAL” WORLD

- Workplace communication must connect to colleagues’ experiences, worlds, and lives
- But it must also create buffers from and disrupt patterns of the real world: racism, inequities, bias, and more
WHAT DOES THE WORK OF EQUITABLE COMMUNICATION ENTAIL?

- Working across and not erasing human differences
- Managing and working with paradoxes
- Using their affordances and managing their challenges
THANK YOU!
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Slides will be available on my website
https://deborahloewenbergball.com/
(“Google” Deborah Ball)