



Webinar Series

Inclusive Prevention Practice: *A Workshop on Incorporating Equity Literacy into Adolescent Dating Violence Prevention*

In June 2021, Dr. Deinera Exner-Cortens from the University of Calgary presented an on-line workshop on Incorporating Equity Literacy into Adolescent Dating Violence Prevention. Dr. Exner-Cortens would like to acknowledge that the equity literacy concepts covered in her workshop are from Paul Gorski's work.

[Click here to view webinar](#) | [Click here to view presentation slides](#)

What is Equity Literacy?



Equality: The assumption that everyone benefits from the same supports

- This is equal treatment

Equity: Everyone gets the supports they need

- For example, this is the concept of "affirmative action", thus producing equity

Justice: When all causes of inequities are addressed

- Systemic barriers are removed

To achieve equity literacy¹, we must:

1. Recognize oppression

- Notice subtle bias in program materials and interactions within groups
- Show curiosity about how your community and school policies and standard practices might be disadvantaging youth
- Reject views that outcome inequalities (such as dating violence victimization) are the result of the cultures or mindsets of students

2. Respond

- Providing specific skills practice opportunities such as bystander training, so students know what to do when they witness situations that perpetuate oppression
- Training facilitators to develop the facilitation skills and content knowledge necessary to intervene when they're working with youth and other adults and biases and inequities arise
- Fostering conversations with colleagues about equity concerns in your prevention work

3. Redress

- Changing root causes of inequity
- How are we advocating against inequitable practices and teaching about sexism, poverty, homophobia, sexism, racism, ableism etc. as part of our prevention work? How are we advocating for large-scale social change?
- Don't confuse diversity with equity: Inclusion and representation of different cultures and backgrounds does not mean that you are addressing larger inequities
 - For example, we should not respond to issues of racism or racial conflict with a cultural celebration - we need to target the root causes of these issues to trigger long-term change

4. Cultivate and Sustain bias and discrimination-free communities

- How are we communicating with families, while understanding that students have different access to resources?
- Prioritizing needs and barriers experienced by youth who are marginalized when making any decision that has to do with policy and/or practice

Basic Principles of Equity Literacy²

Direct Confrontation

- There is no path to equity that does not involve a direct confrontation with inequity
- If we don't directly confront inequities through policies, practices, and programming decisions, we are actively playing a role in sustaining inequity

"Culture of Poverty"

- A concept that asserts that the values of the people experiencing poverty play a significant role in perpetuating their impoverished condition - **this is incorrect!**
- In fact, poverty has nothing to do with culture. Poverty stems from issues with **power and privilege** in our society's structure that perpetuate poverty

Equity Ideology

- "Equity is more than a list of practical strategies"³
- It is about our worldview, how we understand problems, and how we understand solutions to those problems

Prioritization

- For every decision we make, we must think about how those decisions will affect the most marginalized members of our community.

Redistribution

- To create an equitable future, we have to directly change what we are currently doing.
- "Equity requires the redistribution of material, cultural, and social resources, opportunities, and access to those who are most in need"⁴



¹From Paul Gorski's work <https://www.equityliteracy.org/equity-literacy-definition>

²Gorski, P. (2020). *Basic Principles for Equity Literacy*. EdChange and the Equity Literacy Institute.

https://08a3a74a-dec5-426e-8385-bdc09490d921.filesusr.com/ugd/38199c_75fb386a758c4c21834dce207d917a4c.pdf

³Gorski, P. (2020).

⁴Gorski, P. (2020).

Fix Injustice, Not Kids

- Issues like teen dating violence are “not the result of deficiencies in a community’s culture, mindsets, or “toughness”, but rather are caused by larger social inequities”⁵
- Equity initiatives focus not on “fixing” marginalized people, but on fixing the conditions that marginalize people.

One Size Fits Few

- “No individual identity group shares a single mindset, value system, learning style, or communication style”⁶
- We do have identity-specific equity frameworks that can help us to understand how we might develop equitable prevention programs, but we must remember that there are individuals within each group that will each have different needs.



Evidence-Informed Equity

- “Equity initiatives should be based on evidence for what works, rather than trendiness”⁷
- Evidence can mean scientific research, stories and lived experience, art, and more. Draw on resources that cater to the needs of the community that you are working with.

How do we Incorporate Equity Literacy into Professional Development?

1. Recognize

- Work directly with the youth who are your key stakeholders (as well as others in the community) to review what you are doing for your dating violence programming through an equity lens

2. Redress and cultivate:

- Implement safe and encouraged changes to program activities to better fit the age, culture and context of the population served, for example:
 - Making materials inclusive to all populations
 - Adapting role plays to different family structures
 - Customizing information to include an explicit consideration of sexism, racism, poverty, ableism, homophobia, transphobia etc. and how those relate to teen dating violence



⁵Gorski, P. (2020).

⁶Gorski, P. (2020). *Basic Principles for Equity Literacy*. EdChange and the Equity Literacy Institute. https://08a3a74a-dec5-426e-8385-bdc09490d921.filesusr.com/ugd/38199c_75fb386a758c4c21834dce207d917a4c.pdf

⁷Gorski, P. (2020).

7-Step Process to Think Through Equity Literacy⁸

1. Identify biases and inequities
2. Take stock of various stakeholder perspectives
3. Consider challenges and opportunities
4. Imagine equitable and just outcomes
5. Brainstorm immediate-term response
6. Brainstorm longer-term response
7. Craft a plan of action based on possible responses



To Learn More, Please Visit These Resources:

<https://www.equityliteracy.org/>

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/>

<https://youthdatingviolence.prevnet.ca/>

<https://youthdatingviolence.prevnet.ca/equity-literacy-podcast/>

⁸List is from: Gorski, P. C., & Pothini, S.G. (2018). *Case Studies on Diversity and Social Justice Education* 2nd Edition. Routledge, New York.



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