

INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

PREFACE to the NNER STATEMENT on EQUITY

The Governing Council of the National Network for Educational Renewal extends its deep appreciation to the members of the Equity Study Group for their work that has led the NNER to the adoption of this clear and strong position on equity. To make our position on equity a reality, each setting is expected to examine and grapple with institutional policies and practices in light of the NNER position. Settings will report on tripartite deliberations on equity, actions taken, and demonstrate progress toward the NNER equity position in each Annual Report. The themes in the document will be incorporated into specific sessions at upcoming annual meetings of the National Network for Educational Renewal.

NNER STATEMENT ON EQUITY

The NNER embraces a vision of educational excellence for all. This vision, described in The Agenda for Education in a Democracy, brings to light the symbiotic relationship between educational excellence and equity. The NNER believes that educational excellence involves knowledge, practices and structures that support the full participation of all individuals in teaching and learning opportunities, and in educational decision-making and policy setting.

The NNER believes democracy requires equity in educational and other social settings. To achieve equity the NNER must work toward the elimination of discrimination against groups oppressed on the basis of traits including but not limited to age, disability, gender, language, locality, personal appearance, political ideology, race, religion, sexual orientation and socio-economic status. The NNER recognizes that inequities surface continually as democratic institutions adapt to changing circumstances, and that consequently, constant vigilance is needed to identify obstacles and barriers to educational access, opportunity and attainment. The NNER sponsors and encourages proactive, critical inquiry at all educational levels—from classroom to national policy arenas—into policies, conditions and practices that limit or promote educational access, opportunity and attainment.

The NNER believes that democracy is strengthened by diversity. Diversity is an indispensable feature of the NNER's commitment to using democratic processes to facilitate democratic ends. At a minimum, this commitment to diversity requires the inclusion of all oppressed groups on a basis of equal respect. More broadly, it includes educating ourselves about others and demonstrating a willingness to fairly consider multiple views. Such inclusion sometimes generates discomfort that is necessary for helping others change and for being open to change ourselves. Thus, the NNER supports broad representation and active engagement in forging educational and other social and political decisions.

The NNER recognizes, however, that the full diversity of human values includes racist, sexist, and other kinds of anti-democratic values incompatible with the NNER's moral commitments. The NNER's moral commitments obligate members of the Network to work against anti-democratic values, particularly in educational forums, as far as is consistent with the rights of the proponents of such values.

The NNER recognizes that there are many ways to ameliorate problems of inequity and lack of diversity consistent with this Statement on Equity and therefore expects that local responses will differ. Further, the NNER does not assume any of its member settings have fully realized the ideals of equity and diversity described in this Statement, but expects, rather, that each member setting is committed to these ideals and works toward their advancement.