



Reflecting on equity, power and trust: foundational questions to guide discussion

Activity Guide



Purpose

Implementation and improvement are social processes – the people involved, the interactions between people, and the structures around them are important to how we work with one another, make decisions and implement. Given the social nature of change, concepts of equity, power, and trust are important to consider throughout the process.

The purpose of this activity is to provide you with a set of guiding questions to help you reflect on equity, power, and trust as they relate to your SEL implementation roles and activities. It is important to be mindful of equity, power, and trust throughout implementation. Specific considerations related to these concepts will be embedded in each activity. This activity can be considered as a foundational reflective tool.

Before You Start

This activity can be used by anyone wishing to reflect on foundational questions related to equity, power and trust (COEs, LEAs and schools). Given that this activity is reflective in nature, we recommend setting aside individual time to review and reflect on these questions.

Next, it helps to collectively reflect on these questions (e.g., with your COE implementation team, school SEL implementation team, etc.). It is not unlikely that during collective reflection, feelings of discomfort may arise and challenging conversation may ensue. Mitigation strategies include setting up comfortable physical and psychological spaces to discuss these questions and encouraging people to be frank and reflective by incorporating SEL rituals that can warm them up.



Before You Start

Tip: You might find it helpful to have a welcoming ritual related to the Wheel of Power and Privilege. The Wheel of Power and Privilege is not perfect, but it helps to highlight certain invisible forms of power that we sometimes don't reflect on or realize we have, as we tend to focus on power that comes from more formal or historical roles. Ways to reflect on this wheel include:

- In a virtual setting, screen share the image of the Wheel of Power and Privilege and use Zoom's annotate function to enable all participants to indicate where they fall on the wheel (*note, the person sharing their screen will need to set annotations to be anonymous to make participants more comfortable*).
- In virtual and in person settings, you may want to give participants a few minutes of silent reflection to allow them to independently consider where they fall on the wheel, or set them up with a partner and have them share with their partner what they feel comfortable sharing about their reflections on the wheel.

WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE





Foundational guiding questions related to equity

Equity is both a process and an outcome. There are some general questions related to equity you can ask yourself throughout the implementation process:

1. Every time you draw on evidence to inform an implementation step, do you consider:
 - a) The disciplinary norms and other considerations that may bias the design, analysis, and interpretation of research studies you are referring to (e.g., structural racism in the field, non-engagement of end-users)?
 - b) The prevailing social and political constructions of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, etc. at the time of the study?
 - c) Other valuable forms of knowledge produced by the people impacted by the initiative?

2. When working with other people on any step of implementation, do you consider:
 - a) Inclusiveness of people who experience or are impacted by the problem
 - b) Power dynamics between the people involved, that are rooted in either formalized roles, historical or societal events/factors, or hidden/invisible characteristics that place people in positions of privilege?
 - c) Their level of involvement in terms of having a meaningful role and say in implementation; considering their needs; and considering how they benefit from involvement?
 - d) The values, beliefs and biases people bring to the table, whether implicit or explicit ?

3. At each decision point of implementation, do you consider:
 - a) Who benefits and loses when the decision is made
 - b) What the consequences or magnitude of losses are to certain people versus others?



Foundational questions related to power & trust

Think about who you are interacting with to make this work happen:

- Do you trust them and why/why not?
- Do they trust you and why/why not?
- Who has more power and why?
- What does the power dynamic do to the relationship?

In reflecting on trust and power dynamics, be mindful of what can impact these and name them. Characteristics such as formal roles, historical roles, and social power can impact whether you trust someone and what your power dynamic with them is. Trust is also impacted by whether you perceive someone as competent; whether you feel connected to them; and whether you perceive them as being authentic.



Takeaway

These questions are aimed to support reflection. Clear cut answers do not necessarily emerge from this exercise. However, the most important thing to keep in mind following your reflection and discussion with team members and colleagues is that the work does not stop there. Consider the inequities, power imbalances, and mistrust that might currently be at play and discuss actions that can be taken to help mitigate these. Create plans to revisit these questions at different points in implementation.