



A Better Tomorrow for Our Children

By Patrick Pizzo, EdD

We all need to ensure equity and inclusion and a consistent commitment to a culture of diversity.

The American philosopher and political activist Cornel West stated, “Empathy is not simply a matter of trying to imagine what others are going through, but having the will to muster enough courage to do something about it.”

True advocacy and alliance are the foundation of social action. Recent events have illuminated the need to ensure equity and inclusion and a consistent commitment to a culture of diversity—especially in the workplace.

The Equity 4 LI Youth Committee (www.Equity4LIYouth.org), launched in partnership with the East Meadow School District in New York, grew out of the desire to ensure every young person begins their career journey with the same opportunities and the same support, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, or economic origins, and to create a culture of inclusion that welcomes all.

The organization helps provide underserved young people across the Long Island area with employment, training, and mentoring opportunities to address past

inequities and to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion across all organizations.

The committee includes local political leaders and representatives of local/national advocacy organizations such as the NAACP Education Committee; school and school district leaders; members of the legal community, including the Nassau County Bar Association; leaders in the field of mental health; and college students.

Equity means giving every student what they personally need to succeed, which is why the group is diverse both as traditionally defined and diverse in members’ areas of expertise. Because the goal is for each student to create their own path to meet their goals, the role of the committee members is to support their path, not to impose a unified path of their design.

Partnerships for Success

Equity 4 LI Youth is an action committee that works in collaboration with the district. The committee and its partner organizations reach out to youth in previously underserved communities, alert them to

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employment opportunities, and provide mentoring and support.

The group actively engages diverse communities via its website, a repository for opportunities, educational material, and access to the many partner groups. The website encourages students to assess their skills and interests through an online job placement survey; the results also enable committee members to connect students with potential jobs or internships.

Diversity changes cultures at all levels of an organization, making a district a desired destination for candidates

Events to address relevant issues and raise awareness about diversity and inclusion are led by committee members, including the college student advisory members, with input from professional experts.

As part of its efforts to promote diversity, the group also advocates for job-placement opportunities for diverse candidates to help fill instructional and ancillary staff

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positions in the East Meadow School District and other partner districts.

Diversity changes cultures at all levels of an organization, making a district a desired destination for candidates; districts benefit from a deeper understanding of students’ various lived experiences. Districts derive a long-term benefit from a larger pool of candidates. An increased number of applications promotes competition, which leads to higher-quality hires.

Equity 4 LI Youth is reaching out to young people by organizing conferences that feature expert speakers, participating in partner groups’ outreach efforts, mentoring young people, and acting as a platform for equity. Several East Meadow School District leaders support these efforts

through participation on the committee and at the events.

Committee of Action

The committee does not seek nor accept monetary donations. The goal is to identify people who can foster change through their participation and collaboration. The success of Equity 4 LI Youth is measured by its ability to achieve systematic, lasting, and collaborative change—not winning one campaign and claiming victory. It’s about building a better future.

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