

Threshold Project Community of Practice Series 2015-2016

Re-Imagining General Education with an Equity Mindset

The Threshold Project is an evolving community of practice committed to fostering educational access and equity by collaboratively reimagining General Education in the California Community Colleges and State Universities. We believe that meaningful and equitable revisions in curricula, as well as in articulation, alignment, and assessment practices, requires long-term, collegial, sustained learning and dialogue across disciplines and across educational segments. We seek to support that learning through focused inquiry:

What does it mean to use equity and threshold concepts as lenses to think about general education curricula and the notion of “proficiency”?

We designed this year’s convenings with the following values and assumptions in mind:

- All students deserve a rigorous and engaging curriculum that builds on their cultural assets and apprentices them into academic and disciplinary modes of thinking and practicing.
- Faculty also deserve rigorous, relevant and engaging professional development opportunities that push their learning, acknowledge and build from their experience and expertise, and allow them to contribute to the shape of higher education.
- Learning is a network forming process: connections and relationships are crucial to the learning process.
 - Therefore, it is not only appropriate, it is essential that instructors attend to the affective dimensions of learning; powerful classrooms are facilitated by a balanced focus on the personal, social, cognitive, and knowledge-building aspects of classroom life (Schoenbach et. al., 2012).
 - Indeed, our collegial relationships with one another are an important element of our own ability to learn and building those relationships is a priority worthy of our time.
 - We should not expect that collaboration across disciplines and segments will always be easy. Meaningful learning often involves struggle and/ or discomfort. The community of practice model is intended to create the time and space to support the social and personal dimensions of our community in ways that allow for authentic participation and diversity of perspective.

Setting Goals (Personal)

Think-Write

Before we move into the rest of the institute, take a moment to set a goal for yourself for today. You will not be asked to share this goal with anybody.

Setting Norms (Social)

What are some of the implicit and explicit “rules” or normal group behaviors that will support your participation in this institute and will help you accomplish your goals? Be prepared to share an idea with the group.

Why Am I Here?

Think-Write

Thank you for spending your Friday with us! Take some time to reflect on what brought you here. What draws you to this work? What prior experience, if any, do you have working with threshold concepts, working on equity, and/or working in an interdisciplinary/ inter-segmental community of practice? What has gone well? What challenges have you faced?

As you write, consider your own personal “Why.”

- What are you passionate about? WHY do you teach/ advocate/ program build in the ways that you do? What is your bottom line—the thing that, if pushed, you really won’t compromise on? What drives you?
- What about your own past experiences/ identity might be the root of this passion?

Digging in the Dirt: Our Own Learning Histories

Think-Write

Write about a learning experience in your life (preferably in your current field/specialization of teaching) when you both:

- Encountered uncertainty and frustration because what you were learning challenged previous assumptions

AND

- Experienced an irreversible transformation in your understanding

If you can, try to describe this process of learning on both a *cognitive* and an *affective* level.

Threshold Concepts & Their Traits

How do students experience a specific threshold concept in your discipline? **Choose one threshold concept to work with.**
How is the specific threshold concept transformational & irreversible, troublesome & counter-intuitive, and liminal?

Feel free to use this handout to capture your thinking.

Threshold Concept		
Transformative & Irreversible Elements	Counter-Intuitive & Troublesome Elements	Liminal Elements

Inquiry: Equity Mindedness and Equity Proficiencies

Think-Write

What does it mean to you to “bring an equity-minded lens” to curriculum and pedagogy? How do you define “equity”? How might this definition be tied to your disciplinary identity, your cultural identity, your personal history, etc.?

“Equity Proficiencies” Text Set

Individual Reading and Reflecting

Locate the excerpts from *America’s Unmet Promise*, *Step up and Lead for Equity*, and “Equity Literacy: An Introduction” in your folder. Choose 1-2 texts to focus on and, as you read, jot down your questions, reactions, associations, etc. Consider what these equity proficiencies mean in your discipline, in your classroom, and on your campus.

Small Group Discussion

Share your notes with your small group.

Discuss your various reactions to the text(s). Consider what threshold concepts underlie the equity proficiencies described by the texts. What do we actually need to know and understand to be able to do this?

Gallery Walk

Using quotes from Chapter 3 of *Threshold Concepts in Women's and Gender Studies: Ways of Seeing Thinking and Knowing*, "Privilege and Oppression"

Small Group Work:

Each small group will receive a sheet of paper with a quote from "Privilege and Oppression."

In your small group, take a few minutes to reflect on the quote and talk about it. Consider:

- What's your gut response?
- What do you think the quote "means"? Can you provide an example to explain it?
- Why is this concept considered a threshold concept? What might be troublesome about it? If the threshold is crossed, what might be transformational about it?
- What would it mean to bring an "equity-minded lens" shaped by this concept to teaching, learning, curriculum, and/or assessment?

On your poster, attach your quote and write 3 or more comments that reflect your responses. When you are done, hang your poster on the wall.

Gallery Walk:

Walk around the room and at each poster, read the quote and the responses to it. On a Post-It Note, add your own response or question and attach it to the poster.

Note: this is a silent activity.

Threshold Project 1 day Workshop Reflection and Feedback

Take a few minutes to reflect on and synthesize today's learning.

1. What are some of your main takeaways from today's session?
2. What helped to support your learning today?
3. What questions remain?
4. Are there specific ways that we can support your work?

Please flip over the page to provide us with additional feedback about today.

1) Please rate the event on the following scale: (circle your answer)

(a) Very Poor

(b) Poor

(c) Fair

(d) Good

(e) Excellent

Comments:

2) How useful will the topics covered at this event be in advancing your campus student success efforts?

Not at all useful (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Very useful (7)
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Comments:

3) How likely are you to put into practice one or more ideas from this event?

Not at all likely (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Very likely (7)
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Comments:

4) How likely are you to recommend this event or topic to a colleague?

Not at all likely (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Very likely (7)
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5) What could have been **improved**?

6) What would you like to **learn more about**?