



# ReachOut e-Diversity News

An Electronic Publication of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council

**Welcome Back! New This Month:**

- 1. Leading with a Framework**
- 2. Collaborative Leadership**
- 3. Building Equity Teams**
- 4. Holding Courageous Conversations**

April 2019 Edition | Volume 14 Issue 2

Read, Pass on to Friends,  
Family Members, Colleagues  
& Constituents



Don't  
Miss an  
Issue!

It is the policy of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council to use person-first language in items written by staff. Items reprinted or quoted exactly as they originally appear may not reflect this policy.



## “Step to the Dream”

Upon nominating Cynthia DeVese to receive the Alston Award, John R. Kellogg, Superintendent, Westerville City Schools, identified her leadership as the first-ever Coordinator of Minority Student Achievement, as contributing to the Westerville District and its students' ability to “step to the dream” of equity and education. In his nomination letter he wrote:

“...Cynthia’s outstanding work, in collaboration with other leaders, has touched the lives of many, many of our students and helped them to “step to the dream” of equity in education. Her graceful, thoughtful, and persistent leadership style has earned her the trust and respect of staff, students, and families across our community.”

Here is a sampling of her accomplishments during the last five years.

- Received a \$10,000 grant from Westerville Education Foundation to support the Student Connections program.
- Developed and organized a MODEL program, which matches middle school girls with women leaders in the community for mentoring and support.
- Collaborated to bring the Amazing Tei Street to present to all middle school girls and Roy Hall to do the same with all middle school boys across the district.
- Supported the district’s Lead Higher Initiative, which focuses on increasing minority student enrollment in (Advanced Placement) and IB (International Baccalaureate) course work. The district has experienced a significant increase in that enrollment because of the program.

- Organized the Summer AP (Advanced Placement) Boot Camp for students taking AP or IB course work for the first time.
- Collaborated with the OSU (Ohio State University) Dennis Learning Center to provide professional development support for teachers on how to support student study skills.
- Supports the high school Black History Month programs.
- Organized professional development for all administrators and staff related to implicit bias in a partnership with OSU Kirwan Institute.
- Supported the development of district level and building level Equity Teams.
- Collaborated with district officials to examine issues related to students and food scarcity.

A single page nomination does not allow me to provide a complete description of her work. Suffice it to say, that Cynthia’s leadership has helped our district and our students “step to the dream” of equity and education. She is a blessing to the Westerville community.”

***The Alston Award was given in honor of Miriam Alston, who, in 1851, inherited nine slaves in her husband’s will. She managed to obtain 21 more from his four nephews, and sent them all north to be freed. Their descendants became educators, lawyers, musicians and veterans of almost every war. The Alston Award is given to a Westerville business or community member who most effectively exemplifies the characteristics demonstrated by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.***



At the City of Westerville’s Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 2019 Breakfast Celebration, Cynthia DeVese received the Alston Award.



Grateful for being recognized, DeVese acknowledged the support of her family, and the countless teachers, school counselors, mentors, and community people who worked alongside of her to get the job done. And she reminded them that there was still more to do.

This ReachOut e-Diversity Newsletter focuses on four leadership attributes that Cynthia DeVese used to facilitate buy-in and ownership across diverse stakeholders to intentionally create a place for positive outcomes to flourish from an organization that embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion. These included: establishing a framework to guide her work; utilizing a collaborative leadership style; building teams; and holding courageous conversations.

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## Leading With a Framework



Leading with a framework provides a model that guides the actions of everyone in the organization. Specifically, a framework is tied to the organization's mission and long-term desired outcome that indicates the mission has been achieved.

[-READ MORE-](#)

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Collaborative leadership is a style practiced by leaders who recognize the importance of interpersonal relationships and cross functional collaborations for organizational success. Collaborative leaders encourage shared knowledge, power and credit. These leaders navigate both themselves and their team into a mutual purpose.

## Collaborative Leadership



[-READ MORE-](#)

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## Building Equity Teams



The goal of an Equity Team is to promote institutional change within the organization in order to better serve the community. Establishing an Equity Team provides direction and leadership in culturally relevant professional development (CRPD), policies, and practices. The Equity Team becomes the lens of the organization and aims to institutionalize change.

[-READ MORE-](#)

# Holding Courageous Conversations

Cynthia DeVese invited stakeholders to participate in courageous conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion and how these topics affect the education system. These conversations involved small groups, occurred once a month over a five-six month time period. Examples of topics covered included Identity and Cultural Competence, Privilege, Code-switching, Power, Control and Trauma, Policy and Practice.



[-READ MORE-](#)



In each article, you are invited to “Step to the Dream” and champion within your organization to embrace diversity, equity and inclusion.

Share your successes on ODDC’s social media platforms. So that we can learn from each other and celebrate our collective movement in making Ohio a place where individuals with disabilities who are unserved and underserved get their needs met and live a better quality of life.



The purpose of “Reach Out” e-Diversity newsletter is to promote interagency collaboration and coordination that result in agencies providing culturally competent services to the unserved/underserved populations in Ohio



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## Leading With a Framework



Leading with a framework provides a model that guides the actions of everyone in the organization. Specifically, a framework is tied to the organization's mission and long-term desired outcome that indicates the mission has been achieved. Key terms are defined so that everyone in the organization has a shared understanding of them.

The framework identifies priority areas that create focus on what matters. These priorities are used to guide the identification, development, and implementation of the organization's programs and services.

Feedback about the organization's framework should be solicited from all stakeholder groups. So that the adopted framework is the outgrowth of diverse and inclusive input.

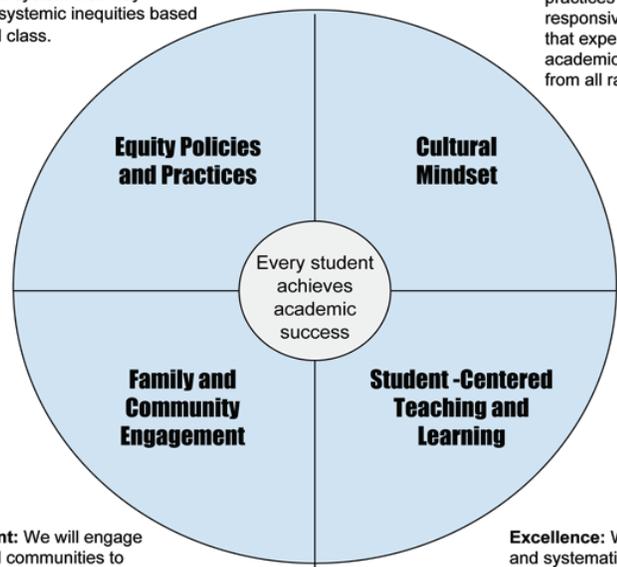


WESTERVILLE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Equity Framework

**Equity:** We will act to eliminate gaps and barriers between our mission and the policies, practices, and structures in our school system that may perpetuate systemic inequities based on race and class.

**Empowerment:** We will develop individual and organizational knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices to create culturally responsive learning environments that expect and support high academic achievement for learners from all racial groups.



**Engagement:** We will engage families and communities to create sustainable relationships in supporting academic achievement for all learners.

**Excellence:** We will identify, develop, and systematically implement teaching and learning strategies that make a significant difference in the education of children to ensure all learners have access to rigorous content at or above grade level as demonstrated by research and best practices.

*Our mission is to prepare students to contribute to the competitive and changing world in which we live.*

[Click to download Full Size](#)



Use your answers to the following questions to create and/or review and revise your organization's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Framework

- What key terms do you need to make sure there is shared understanding among stakeholders in your organizations?
- Have they been defined?
- Is everyone on the same page?
- How do you assess shared understanding?
- What are your organization's priority areas?
- How do these align with the organization's mission and desired outcomes?



How has your Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Framework informed your organization's work and outcomes?



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## Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership is a style practiced by leaders who recognize the importance of interpersonal relationships and cross functional collaborations for organizational success. Collaborative leaders encourage shared knowledge, power and credit. These leaders navigate both themselves and their team into a mutual purpose.



The Westerville City Schools MODEL program is the result of collaborative leadership. MODEL stands for Mentors Opening Doors Enriching Lives. Cynthia DeVese along

with Jill Ponzi, Guidance Counselor, and Tami Santa, Student Assistance Program Coordinator created the program through Student Connections. This program is designed to connect students to diverse literature, mentors and tutors, aiming to address achievement disparities and raise awareness of college and career opportunities. The program was funded by a grant from the Westerville Education Foundation. Other partners included Role Model Magazine, community public officials, residents, and businesses.



“Most of the girls in the program are not in the same social group, but when they sit at the same table and discuss things important to them, they realize a commonality and see that, “I’m not the only one who feels this way.”

The following are 5 tips for a successful collaborative leadership.

1

**Look outside of your area of responsibility (both within and outside the organization) for individuals who have a shared interest in your desired outcomes.** Within the organization, there are usually multiple stakeholders at all levels. Outside the organization, think in terms of individuals who could directly benefit, funders that have a priority interest, as well as other individuals or organizations who may be engaged in similar efforts.

2

**Give everyone an opportunity to contribute.** When you value everyone's ideas and opinions, there is a place for them at the table to contribute. Make sure you solicit their feedback and find meaningful ways they can be engaged.

3

**Establish a system and process for communication and coordination.** Having clarity up front about roles and responsibilities is essential. Agreeing how to communicate at the outset also ensures that communication is timely and considers personal preferences and differences. Simply put when you define and reach agreement up front before you start working together, it minimizes individuals taking actions as "personal."

4

**Reach agreement on the collective outcome.** Don't assume everyone has a shared understanding of the desired outcome. For example, as a mentor, what can you contribute to raising awareness of college and career opportunities? How will you know when the outcome is achieved?

5

**Hold each other accountable.** Everyone is contributing in a meaningful way which is necessary for the overall outcome to be achieved. Make sure that everyone agrees to holding each other accountable for completing the work they have been assigned and realizing the desired outcome from their effort. Establishing how you will hold each other accountable can be incorporated into your system and process for communication and coordination.

Collaboration combines the knowledge, experience and creativity of others and creates shared accountability. A collaborative approach isn't always easy; hearing others out and letting them have their say requires a measure of patience. However, there are some significant benefits that come from collaboration, even when it's hard or inefficient: People discover new insights, become less dependent on the "boss," develop and learn, increase their capacity for innovation, and become more committed and passionate about decisions and plans.



Think about your leadership style.

Download the [leadership infographic](#).

Select 1 collaborative leadership characteristic that you need to improve.

“Step to the dream” and make that characteristic a part of your leadership.

[Click to Download Infographic!](#)



Traditional Leaders	vs	Collaborative Leaders
The workplace is changing. Leadership is changing. The future is collaborative.		
<p>Believe power comes from their position of authority</p>	1	<p>Believe power is greatest in a collective team</p>
<p>Maintain ownership of information</p>	2	<p>Openly share information and knowledge</p>
<p>Sometimes listen to suggestions and ideas from their team</p>	3	<p>Encourage suggestions and ideas from their team</p>
<p>Deliver the approved solution to their team</p>	4	<p>Facilitate brainstorming with their team</p>
<p>Allocate time and resources only when proven necessary</p>	5	<p>Enable their team with immediate time and resources</p>
<p>Adhere to specific roles and responsibilities</p>	6	<p>Allow roles and responsibilities to evolve and fluctuate</p>
<p>Fight fires and focus on symptoms</p>	7	<p>Seek to uncover root causes of issues</p>
<p>Review staff performance annually based on company policy</p>	8	<p>Offer immediate and ongoing feedback with personalized coaching</p>

Created by the Collaborative Lead Training Co. www.collaborativelead.com © 2013 Collaborative Lead Training Co.



Tell us how leading using your new characteristic made a difference in your organization.



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## Building Equity Teams



The Westerville City Schools (WCS) Office of Minority Student Achievement is committed to student improvement efforts that support access and equity through the development of initiatives and projects that accelerate student learning and ensures that minority students graduate ready to succeed in college and careers. The office works within the District's strategic goal for every student to achieve academic success. One of its initiatives is the establishment and utilization of Equity Teams.

The goal of an Equity Team is to promote institutional change within the organization in order to better serve the community. Establishing an Equity Team provides direction and leadership in culturally relevant professional development (CRPD), policies, and practices. The Equity Team becomes the lens of the organization and aims to institutionalize change.



Two types of equity teams were established by the Minority Student Achievement Office. A District Equity Team and Building Equity Teams. These teams were charged to examine structures and processes that may impede progress toward diversity, equity and success of all students. Specifically, the teams are focused on:

- Creating awareness and understanding among all staff of the implicit biases that serve as barriers to academic achievements
- Assisting teachers and administrators in identifying teaching and learning strategies and approaches that help raise student achievement for all students
- Examining the school community’s actions through the lens of equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Ensuring that district policies and practices support and promote the following for all students...
  - High expectations
  - Rigorous learning opportunities
  - Differentiated instruction to meet the various learning styles and cultural styles
  - Positive learning and school experiences

An Equity Institute was established to provide a series of culturally relevant workshops over the course of six months in which all equity team members engage to develop their capacity to foster positive change on behalf of the achievement of underrepresented students.

The Institute offers opportunities for team members to share, reflect, and plan to inform their equity work.

Teams strengthen their knowledge, attitudes, skills and practices to create culturally responsive learning environments while developing strategies toward equity goals.

Teams receive expert guidance and facilitation to work together to address the gaps and challenges they face in their education equity efforts.



Dr. Antoinette Miranda, Professor of School Psychology in the Department of Educational Studies, The Ohio State University, leads the WCS Equity Institute.

[Click here for a PDF resource](#) that provides information about how to establish and manage equity teams.



If you do not have equity teams, develop a plan and implement.

If you do have equity teams, identify how you can make improvements and implement.



Pictures of your equity teams and stories about their activities and outcomes.



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## Holding Courageous Conversations

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Creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment requires having courageous conversations about topics that often times are difficult to talk about but necessary to build trust and improve the quality of your relationships. Cooperative relationships are built on trust, need openness and a willingness to truly see the other person.

“The best way to improve the quality of your relationships is to improve the quality of your conversations.”

Brené Brown, in her book “Dare to Lead”, encourages leaders to show up with their whole heart. According to Brown, “it isn’t easy because choosing courage over comfort is not always our default.”



Cynthia DeVese

Cynthia DeVese invited stakeholders to participate in courageous conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion and how these topics affect the education system. These conversations involved small groups, occurred once a month over a five-six month time period. Examples of topics covered included Identity and Cultural Competence, Privilege, Code-switching, Power, Control and Trauma, Policy and Practice.



DeVese utilized KiMISTRY conversation guidelines and best practices to guide the format for the Courageous Conversation sessions (Kimberly Brazwell© KiMISTRY LLC). The following is an example of an agenda.

## Sample Agenda

Activity	Explanation
Homework Discussion	Cohort members take turns sharing homework assignments
Break and Free-write	Private and your subject choice
Dialogue Activity	TBA
Wrap-up	Appreciative Inquiry <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Real Talk cohort champion of the week</li><li>- Share something/someone you appreciated during today's meeting</li></ul>

Sometimes our teams and organizations just aren't ready to have these conversations. Sometimes we aren't either. Perhaps it is because we do not know enough about the topic or have not had exposure to people from a specific identity group. Assessing individual and team readiness is key to engaging in these conversations. What might one consider when assessing their individual readiness?

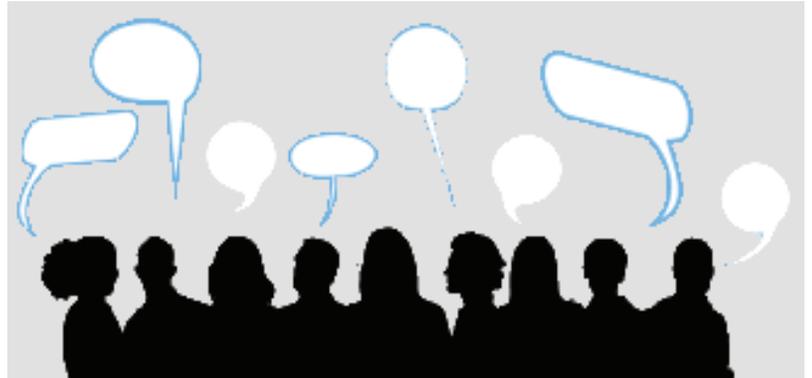
- **Exposure:** Ask yourself: Who is in my world? The less exposure you have with people who are different than you, the less likely you will be ready to engage in bold, inclusive conversations.
- **Experience:** This takes "exposure" a step further. Experience is about engaging with those who are different from you in ways that are cross-culturally enriching.
- **Education:** Experience and exposure should be complemented with formal education. This may include workplace trainings, continuing education, research, visiting museums, reading books, etc.
- **Empathy:** Having the capacity to understand the perspective of one's "other," is also necessary to be effective in engaging in bold, inclusive conversations.

It is important to differentiate between preparation and readiness. Readiness refers to the ongoing learning involved in fostering self- and other-understanding. Preparation involves the tactical elements required to plan the conversation. Given the sensitive nature of bold, inclusive conversation, planning is critical. That said, spontaneous meetings to engage in these conversations should be avoided. When planning to engage in a bold, inclusive conversation, consider the following series of questions:

- Why are we having the conversation?
- Who should be part of the dialogue, and why?
- What is the desired outcome?
- How should the conversation be conducted?
- Where should the conversation be held?
- When will the conversation take place?

Holding courageous conversations should be about creating shared meaning and finding common ground. When it comes to issues tied to our identity, we are more likely to be passionate and unmoving in our beliefs. Social psychologists have suggested that we retreat to separatist thinking when our core belief systems are threatened.

Reasoning and evidence simply do not matter. That's why convincing someone to "change what they believe" is difficult and shouldn't be the goal of engaging in these conversations. However, reaching a point of mutual understanding should. "Creating shared meaning" is a stepping stone to getting there. Ask yourself and each other, "what can we agree on?" Creating shared meaning and finding common ground includes statements like:



- "These types of stresses can impact engagement and productivity."
- "We don't know what we don't know, and we all have a lot to learn about each other to have effective dialogue."
- "We all want to be safe."

At the same time, it is important during our courageous conversations to delve into differences. While understanding similarities is certainly a critical middle ground for bold conversations, understanding differences that make a difference is critical to getting to a place of reciprocal understanding. Consider the following when moving into dialogue around differences:

Acknowledge the "elephant" in the room. Polarization exists and acknowledging that is part of the dialogue.

Distinguish interpretations and clarify definitions. Even "universal" terms and values can be interpreted differently across cultures. What do terms like fairness, safety, and trust mean to those involved in the dialogue? Discuss those differences. Write them down.

Uncover your different perspectives and listen with an open mind. Tell your story.

Know when to 'press pause.' Set aside time to reflect. Be okay with non-closure.

Strive for reciprocal empathy. There is no official 'end game' in engaging in these conversations. But ...

If you can get to the point of reciprocal empathy (i.e., the ability to know what it is like to be the "other"), you increase the likelihood of generating new ways to engage with each other. Getting a shared understanding and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion requires being collaborative leadership, having a framework, working in teams and holding courageous conversations.



Get started with hosting a courageous conversation. Make sure you conduct your readiness assessment, prepare, and develop your plan first. Check out the resources provided to assist you in getting started



Pictures of your conversations  
Topics your organization discussed  
Your organization’s readiness  
Actions you took to prepare  
Examples of your strategies and plans



## RESOURCES To Assist You in Getting Started

“Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts” (2018)

<https://www.amazon.com/Dare-Lead-Brave-Conversations-Hearts/dp/0399592520>

Netflix Special: “A Call to Courage”

<http://www.penguinrandomhouseretail.com/2019/03/21/netflix-special-a-call-to-courage>

KiMISTRY conversation guidelines,

(“We Can’t Talk about That at Work!: How to Talk about Race, Religion, Politics, and Other Polarizing Topics”)

(Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2017).

[www.kimistry.net](http://www.kimistry.net)



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