



# Sims-Fayola Foundation Equity Academy



**Our Goal:** The Sims-Fayola Foundation Equity Academy (SFEEA) is designed to increase the capacity of educators and other youth development professionals to deliver quality learning and programming experiences for students of color and to build authentic relationships through an equity lens by engaging them in the deep soul-searching work of understanding their own racial and equity disposition.

**The Challenge:** Equity work is tough work because it challenges our personal assumptions and beliefs about others. Robert Allen, in his best-selling book, “As A Man Thinketh” said “people often want change unless the change involves them.” That speaks to how challenging it can be to examine our own dispositions to something as in your face as equity. Because this work is vital to the outcome of all students, especially our students of color, we believe that periodic workshops will not yield the impact needed for lasting change. Most schools and organizations offer one-shot professional development “trainings” on this tough topic with little or no follow-up support. Our intent with **SFEEA** is to provide an opportunity for our participants to be immersed in sustained development and support to become culturally relevant individuals who can support and facilitate rigorous cognitive and social development of students of color. This sustained model of support supports our goal of personal transformation.

***Transformation, as part of the enculturation processes, calls for deep and personal reflections of oneself in order to understand those culturally driven forces that shape thinking, values, and assumptions about life. Transformation is a must for those engaged in working with students of color, regardless of racial background.***

**What we address:** Over 12 sessions, we increase the capacity of our participants to deliver a quality learning experience in the classroom, mentoring program, or other types of programming through an equity and cultural lens. We walk with participants as they “storm and norm” within themselves about their historical, current, and desired perception and relationship with communities of color. All of this impacts how we show up for and to students of color.



Participants will be challenged to benchmark their own practices in the areas of:

Focus Areas
1. Historical to Current Dispositions of America Towards People of Color
2. An Understanding of Trauma and How It Impacts Life and Learning
3. Cultural Relevancy, Multiculturalism, and Cultural Archetypes
4. Impacting Students of Color: Implications for the Classroom and Programs

**The How:** Cohorts will meet for 12-weeks for 2 hours per session each week. (5:30pm – 730pm MST)

- A. **Sessions Descriptions:** Participants will engage in deep discussions about equity, pedagogy, learning theory, cognitive science, gender based learning, and social constructs with the workshop leader as well as their cohort peers. Participants will build new skills and understanding through activities that include videos, speakers, music, movement, small groups, role play and other activities that allow them to reinforce and build connections between existing knowledge and practices and new knowledge and practices. Participants will also have weekly assessments to help gauge their learning and to provide the workshop leader with information about how to support their development. During the online sessions, participants will download material from the online portal to review, engage in discussion with the session facilitator via ZOOM, answer questions, complete quizzes, and participate in chat room exercises with their cohort. Online participants will also have weekly assessments to help gauge their learning and to provide the workshop leader with information about how to support their development.

**What people are saying about the Equity Academy:**

- a. The Equity Academy provided me with in-depth knowledge and actual tools and strategies to implement in my classroom to diminishing the day-to-day inequalities that contribute to the opportunity gap between white and students of color.
- b. I no longer want to be standing in silence. With what I have learned I must continue to find my voice and participate in the real conversation of change. I am very aware that retreating to your comfort zone is real and I will go back. I also know that I have found a resource in the Academy and that I MUST push myself to do the work.
- c. The most useful part of the Academy was that it provided me with a path and the support to begin a personal journey. Knowing that I was not going to be judged by Dedrick gave me the courage to be real with myself. His appreciation and understanding of the real work, the hard and difficult (often emotional) work allowed/forced me to be honest with myself.
- d. I love how Dedrick made us uncomfortable and then had us examine how uncomfortable we are.
- e. The class has afforded me the opportunity to wrestle with assumptions, beliefs, and even views that I held as absolute truth. It has forced me to really think about some points of my faith and politics and to really sift my world view through those lenses.
- f. I am thankful for the lens I have gained through which I can view my student and my curriculum to make lessons that connect to the culture they are part of. I am excited to take this back to my classroom. This lens also gives me insight into building meaningful relationships with my students.
- g. Dedrick is so passionate and open about his life and own experiences as a person of color and as an educator. His passion is both something that I look up to and strive to have in my field. I like the use of

all of the music and lyrics. The only change I would make, is a little bit more time for group discussion during the classes.

h. Equity Academy has been an eye-opening and character-building addition to my teaching career. I believe every educator, novice to veteran, primary to university, person of color to Caucasian should attend and immerse themselves in Equity Academy if they truly want to reach ALL of their students in a productive and positive way.

i. I have changed the way I write my lesson plans, teach my lessons, look at my kids, treat my kids, and how I look and treat others outside of the walls of my school.

**CLOCK HOURS/CEU's will be offered for this academy.**

