

Defining | US

PODCAST LEARNING COMPANION

Our podcast companions expand learning beyond the walls of schools and organizations by bringing crucial conversations to the leaders, educators and organizations that matter. Use this guide to promote critical reflection, deeper discussion and meaningful connections among adults and youth around the topics that are Defining US.

VOICES OF CHANGE

A Podcast with Stacey DeWitt

INSIDE EPISODE 16:

"The Power of Inclusion"

Join the conversation as Patrick talks to host, Stacey DeWitt, about how we can foster systemic change on a new level. With a plethora of experience and the knowledge to inspire change, Patrick breaks down the importance of looking at everything you do with diversity, equity, and inclusion in mind.



MEET PATRICK JEAN-PIERRE

Dr. Patrick Jean-Pierre is the Principal of Paige Elementary in the Schenectady City School District. Dr. Jean-Pierre has years of combined experience in urban educational settings, which includes public schools, charter schools and universities. His range of professional experiences in the field of education includes teaching, counseling and leadership development, as well as organizational consulting that fosters systemic change. Patrick served as the former Assistant District Director of Diversity, Recruitment and Retention at the Schenectady City School District and additionally has held positions as Deputy Assistant Director, Office of Diversity and Inclusion at the University at Albany and Director of New York State Technical Assistance Center on Disproportionality at Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools at New York University. Patrick taught at the Andries Hudde School in Brooklyn, NY and while at Rutgers University, he served as a Senior Consultant to the NJ Department of Education and developed programs for students from vulnerable populations for the Rutgers Somerset project.



LISTENING AND REFLECTING

Use this learning companion to dive deeper into the episode topic, with suggestions for asynchronous listening, engagement and experiences that offer opportunities for reflection, connection and commitment.

WAYS TO LISTEN

Use the podcast transcript to increase engagement by following along and highlighting words, phrases, or concepts that stand out in the conversation. Take notes in the margin of reflections, connections and questions and consider these three methods for listening:

1. Open Listening - Listen to the podcast to simply notice and note the words, phrases and moments in the conversation that spark emotion and connections
2. Focused Listening - Listen to the podcast with a focus on the Moments that Matter using the time stamp and topics from the "Podcast Notes"
3. Reflective Listening - Listen to the podcast with a focus on critical self-reflection, using any or all the reflection questions below

CRITICAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR BEFORE AND DURING THE LISTENING

BEFORE YOU LISTEN:

1. What experiences have you had that connect to this topic?
2. What do you hope to learn from listening to this episode?

AS YOU LISTEN:

1. How do you define diversity within your school or organization?
2. Whose perspectives are represented or marginalized during the decision-making processes?
3. What important factors may be missing because of lack of representation?
4. What efforts have you made to increase diversity within your school or organization?
5. How do you support conversations among people with varying perspectives?
6. What steps can you take to increase diversity of thought within your personal life?
7. How can you promote diversity within your school or organization?

AFTERWARDS:

1. What about this discussion resonated with you?
2. What questions or ideas would you like to explore further?
3. What conversations will you have or immediate actions will you take to create change in our own sphere of influence?

EXPERIENCES THAT ELEVATE THE LEARNING

The following experiences are intended for use with leaders, educators, parents and those working in educational organizations. The purpose is to promote critical reflection, connection and commitment toward action. They should be used and adapted based on the individuals, group dynamics and organizational context of the learning.

EXPERIENCES TO PROMOTE CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION

Reflect on Important Moments in the Conversation

Relisten to one or all of the powerful moments. Use the [podcast notes](#) to find the powerful moments with time stamps. Then write about your own perspective, experience and insights.

- How does your identity, experiences and knowledge influence your understanding of this topic?
- How does this topic connect with your current context?
- What are the implications to your practice?
- How will you continue the conversation in your school/community/organizations?

WHO'S IN YOUR CIRCLE?

Patrick Jean-Pierre highlights the importance of diversity for personal growth in this podcast episode by suggesting that personal identity development occurs when people closely engage with people from whom they differ. There is a huge personal gain when we engage in conversations that may challenge our perspectives and what we believe about the world. While public spaces have been legally desegregated, many people find themselves in self-segregated social circles that largely, if not solely, reflect their own ethnic, racial, religious, or other backgrounds. Dr. Jean-Pierre's statements about personal identity development represent some of the affordances of diversifying one's inner circle, and one step towards this personal growth is to evaluate your relationships for the diversity of individuals' background, thought, and experiences. Use the following questions to consider the diversity of your interpersonal relationships:

1. Starting with yourself as the center, identify your 3 closest "rings" of relationship. For example, your immediate family may be the first ring and the one closest to the center of the circle. The next ring may represent very close and longtime friends, and the outermost ring may represent your close colleagues.
2. List all of the people represented by each ring around the center of your circle. For each of those people consider their identity markers (gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, religion, dis/ability, etc.)
3. What trends do you notice? What differences can you identify?
4. Based on the diversity of perspectives represented in your circle, are you affording yourself the opportunity to expand your sense of self by challenging your views?

WIDENING YOUR INNER CIRCLE

Now that you have evaluated the diversity within your social circles, consider how you might expand your exposure to diversity of experiences and thought. The following articles provide helpful tips and insight on how to expand your social circles:

- [Why we need diversity in our friendships](#) - Psychology Today
- [Why building diverse friendships can improve your career](#) - Forbes

After reading the articles, identify 2-3 strategies that you may use to widen your social circle. You should also consider the challenges of trying to connect with people whose experiences and identities differ from your own. In what ways can you ground your conversations in a common goal? Jean-Pierre shared in the podcast that it is often the common goal that can serve as an anchor for progress during difficult conversations around diversity.

EXPERIENCES TO PROMOTE BUILDING DEEPER CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS AND THE LEARNING

IS MERITOCRACY A MYTH?

Jean-Pierre and DeWitt discuss the dangers of meritocracy in the context of school systems. They argue that attributing students' success to their ability and willingness without considering their access and privilege obscures the impact of systemic oppression on student outcomes. This activity will allow you to explore in greater depth the concept of meritocracy. Use the linked [video and article](#) to learn more about meritocracy within the educational system, then discuss the following questions with a partner:

1. What is the harm of focusing on students' individual merit and effort?
2. How is diversity related to conversations about meritocracy?
3. Can school leaders reward individual merit and effort without ignoring the pervasiveness of systemic inequity?

DIVERSITY AND INNOVATION

Reflect on Important Moments in the Conversation

Use the timestamps below from the podcast notes to revisit Jean-Pierre's ideas on innovation. Discuss with a partner whether you agree with his thoughts on the role of diversity within innovation. Provide examples to support your argument.

- How do your identity, experiences and knowledge influence your understanding of this topic?
 - How does this topic connect with your current context?
 - What are the implications to your practice?
 - How will you continue the conversation in your school/community/organizations?
-
- 1:18 Patrick's background and how he came into the position he is in now
 - 3:27 "I didn't want to go work anywhere that wouldn't talk about race."
 - 4:25 Noticing disparities in his neighborhood at a young age
 - 5:48 The importance of looking at diversity, equity, and inclusion in everything you do
 - 10:06 Ignoring an entire population of people and setting the wrong expectations
 - 13:00 Making changes is the only way to allow everyone to live to their full potential
 - 14:32 Shifting your mindset
 - 23:06 The importance of being a Black principal
 - 24:19 Patrick's reactions to Defining Us
 - 27:55 "It's really about a kind of inclusion and diversity that is broad and wide."
 - 31:15 "Innovation is really about diversity."

EXPERIENCES TO PROMOTE TAKING ACTION

DISRUPT, INTERRUPT OR DISMANTLE

This podcast episode included a specific focus on the impact of social systems on the perpetuation of inequities in education and more broadly. Jean-Pierre and DeWitt discuss the need for broad scale interventions that reach beyond the individual to make change. The purpose of this activity is for you to identify a problem(s) within your school or organization, and determine how to address it at a systemic level. You should consider what processes, policies and ideologies uphold the structures that allow the problem to sustain itself in your organization.

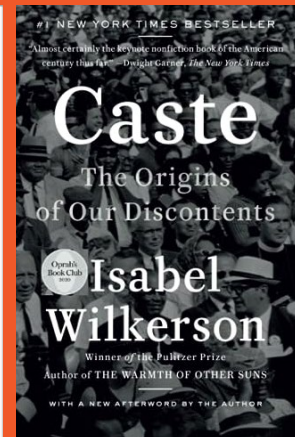
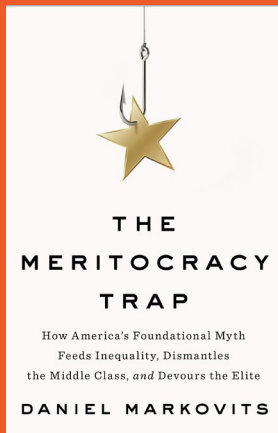
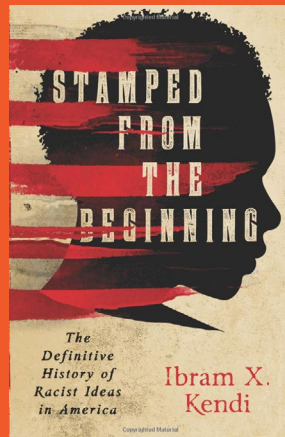
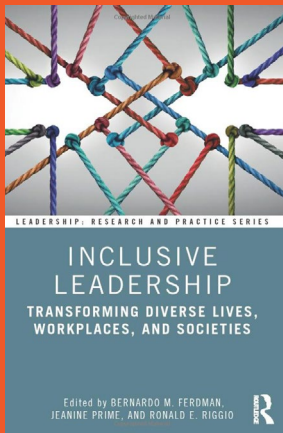
Also, consider the terms disrupt, interrupt and dismantle. Each of these terms forces a change in the system, but do so in very different ways. How are these actions different? Which approach will work best to solve your identified problem? Work collaboratively to gain a variety of perspectives on the problem and possible solutions.

Rebuilding for a Better Future

Jean-Pierre talked extensively about the role of inclusive leadership in rebuilding diverse educational systems. He identifies several practices to support inclusive leadership, including asking questions such as who's included, who's not here, and how can I get them here when building leadership teams? Because we all manage social systems and the systems don't move without us, we must consider how we can make decisions to work against exclusivity.

Consider the leadership roles that you hold within your school or organization. What decisions can you make to actively engage diverse perspectives? Also, Jean-Pierre distinguishes presence from access, suggesting that people should not only be present "at the table" but also have access to share their experiences and perspectives. What commitments will you make to ensure that your leadership will reflect inclusion and access to diversity within your school or organization? Write down your thoughts and keep them in a place for you to reference as often as necessary.

INDEPENDENT READING AND BOOK CLUB RECOMMENDATIONS



REFERENCES:

- [How to Live Happier in 2023: Diversify Your Social Circle](#) - Harvard Business School
- [How Our Narrowing Social Circles Create a More Unequal World](#) - The Guardian

FOLLOW US