Critically conscious questions education leaders must ask as we return to school
(McCabe Zwerger, Bolt, & ANYANWU, 2022)

Last school year felt like it tested educators and leaders in ways never felt before. This summer was a time for contemplation and reflection that led many to leave the profession or their current roles where they weren’t being served or prioritized, such that they could in turn serve and prioritize youth. Now is the time for education leaders to conduct a critical inquiry into how they can lean back into the values of equity and racial justice.

These questions below must be the bare minimum that educational leaders ask of themselves to recenter their work in the service and priority of human-centered, liberatory education. The weight of the world remains overwhelming but the youth we serve deserve leaders who are critically conscious, who practice difficult inquiry, and who intentionally use every 24 hours as another opportunity to do better for children.

1. How am I using an equity lens when making all decisions that impact the youth and community I serve? At RE-Center, we define an equity lens as one through which decisions and actions are made to: 1) center the shared value of equity, 2) mitigate the influence of bias, & 3) elevate the experiences, needs, and voices of students, staff, and community members from historically excluded identities (McCabe Zwerger, 2022).

2. When making a decision, how do I center who will be most impacted by the decision? How am I attending to the impact on folx from historically excluded identities?

3. How have I attended to the disparate impacts that resulted from decisions in the past, and how will this inform my future actions?

4. With every action I take, how am I advancing the values of equity, inclusivity, and anti-racism? How am I contradicting them?

5. How do I model the practice of naming my race and other identities for staff, students, and families in order to ground discussions in intersectional equity?
Advancing equity & racial justice. 
Driving transformative change.

6 Who are my wisdom guides as I enter this new year?

7 Without telling them, how do the youth and community I serve know that I am a co-conspirator for equity and racial justice? What moves do I make?

8 How have you declined the invitation to lean into public health/pandemic fatigue and instead purposefully continue to push yourself and your team to be thoughtful and proactive? What have you learned in the past few years about how disparities are heightened during public health crises?

9 How do I know that everyone on my team holds a shared understanding of equity and how it is manifested in their practices?

10 How do/will I use disaggregated data (by race, gender, ability, socioeconomic advantage, bilingual/multilingual status, etc) to understand the disparities occurring in my school/s? How will I support my staff in doing the same?

11 How am I actively working to disrupt the status quo that enables inequity to thrive? How do I encourage and support my staff in doing the same?

12 How do I ensure that using an equity lens becomes my default, and the default of my staff, rather than employing the lens only in spaces or groups dedicated to discussing and advancing equity?

13 If I have the impact I hope to have this year as a leader, what has happened?