ARC THOUGHTMEET™ SUMMARY:

A FOCUS ON EQUITY

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ARC is a 5-year global educational movement that advances equity, broad excellence, inclusion, wellbeing, democracy, sustainability and human rights in high quality, professionally run systems, which constitute its eight guiding principles. Framed around these principles, the ARC Thoughtmeet is a virtual bringing together of ideas and minds to create swift, timely, and practical collective solutions to urgent problems. Each ARC Thoughtmeet begins with two ARC Starters by world-renowned thought leaders and a facilitated discussion by Steve Munby, former Chief Executive of England's National College for School Leadership.

ARC Thoughtmeet Starter:

Amanda Datnow, PhD

Professor of Education, UCSD

''Can we strive for something better than a return to normal?'

Equity Considerations for Education in the Pandemic and Beyond:

1. Rather than think of students from a deficit perspective through achievement gaps and a 'catch-up' approach, focus on building from children's strengths when they come back to school.
2. Continuous support of socio-emotional wellbeing is a must for students and staff.
3. Equity must be kept at the forefront at all times in our decision-making.
4. We need to recognize and take into account that we have both students and staff experiencing systemic racism. We must consider the lack of representation of minorities in positions of youth and adult leadership. Inequities, such as racial inequities, have been exacerbated during COVID-19
5. There is a need for leaders to dialogue on how systemic racism stems from deep seated beliefs about cultural issues and how they are reproduced in schools and society.
6. Supporting teacher and student learning through professional learning communities and collaboration will be essential to move towards equity.
7. We need to intentionally address inequities in schools and remember that ''good schools are not always good for all children''.
8. We must use data thoughtfully to support equity and excellence goals and resist the temptation to engage in massive testing upon the return to school, or to adopt a deficit thinking paradigm.
9. We must establish the instructional priorities, consider choices carefully and plan according for physical distancing in schools (e.g. back-to-basics literacy and numeracy approach, teacher looping, emphasis on play and social time, etc.).
10. There will need to be a seamless transition between school-home-community in terms of learning in order to recover learning losses.

ARC Thoughtmeet Starter:

Pedro Noguera, PhD
Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education.

"When kids get a good education, they want more education."

What Schools Can Be: Planning for Schools After the Pandemic

1. The pandemic has exposed glaring and evident issues of deep and persuasive inequalities towards Blacks and Indigenous peoples.
2. We need to ensure that the culture and language of children are treated as assets and resources to be valued rather than deficits.
3. Are system leaders willing to create the kind of educational system we want for all? (E.g., sharing decisional power with students, ensuring a child's race or SES background does not predict how well they will do in school, etc.)
4. It is important to not let logistics and finances dominate decision-making, but also to turn to our communities as partners in functioning schools.
5. How do we ensure that both students and teachers feel inspired, appreciated and experience joy within schools and especially during our 'back-to-school'.
6. There is a need to move from: a) pressure and competition to collaboration, b) from teaching of material to teaching a love of learning, c) from parents as consumers to parents as partners.
7. We must listen to teachers and student concerns rather than getting straight to school tasks.

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES (LEARNLAB TOOL)

1.What is the biggest thing on your mind regarding Equity?

- Racism and racial equity are significant issues
- We cannot go back to the old ''normal''
- We should be striving for something better or at least different than before.
- We need to be reinventing and refocusing on well-being and good learning.
- The importance of incorporating play into schools post Covid-19.

2. Which short term strategies resonate with your system?

- Seize the opportunity to accelerate progress on inclusion and equity, such as filling gaps for vulnerable populations
- Build on strengths rather than a deficit and narrowing the gap agenda.
- Personalize student supports.
- Use data for very specific goals, including not overusing data for diagnostic evaluation once we return to school.
- Maintain new relationships with families and communities to support schooling and education.
- Challenge assumptions when it comes to learning and evaluation.

3. What is still on your mind?

- How do we make schools places that affirm identity?
- How do we ensure that achievement and performance are measured in a variety of ways?
- How do we counteract the underrepresentation of minorities in positions of decisional power?
- How do we take into account the impact of culture on education in order to meet each student's needs?

What actions will you take after the Thoughtmeet?

- We will take advantage of the opportunity to rethink schools and schooling to improve our systems due to COVID-19.
- We will find ways to deconstruct how education has failed to reduce inequity for many.
- We will determine key actions to help us move beyond status quo in terms of ensuring equity and inclusion since education is a human right.
- We will create programs with an emphasis on socio-emotional support. There are ways in which we can build on the successful use of digital well-being strategies and support services during the lockdown in order to enhance and enrich the overall support for students when they return to school.
- We will build a positive school culture based on mutual trust and active participation of all members of the school community.