

Common Racial Equity Detours

Equity detours are the actions and approaches schools often adopt in the name of *equity* that might create the illusion of equity progress, but that do not cultivate more equity. Sometimes they are adopted based on misunderstandings about what equity means or the level of transformation needed to achieve equity. Sometimes they are adopted purposefully to avoid more meaningful equity work. The purpose of this list is to give us language for the detours so that we can name them honestly when we observe them happening.

The Detours	Ways You've Observed the Detours
<p><i>Pacing for Privilege Detour</i> Pacing racial equity efforts in a way that prioritizes the comfort and interests of white people over actual progress toward racial equity. Moving at the pace of the people with the least interest in racial equity rather than the pace of the people with the most interest in racial equity</p>	
<p><i>Deficit Ideology Detour</i> Focusing “equity” efforts on programs, initiatives, or practices designed to adjust the mindsets, cultures, values, behaviors, or grittiness of Students of Color while ignoring racial inequity. Racial equity should focus, not on “fixing” Students or Families of Color, but on redressing the racist conditions that marginalize Students and Families of Color.</p>	
<p><i>Celebrating Diversity Detour</i> Mistaking student diversity programs or curricular lessons about “racial diversity” for racial equity or antiracist education. Celebrating diversity does not make a school less racially inequitable.</p>	

<p>Shiny New Program Detour Relying on popular programs to do the racial “equity” work even when they were never designed with racial equity in mind. Common programs that often are used in this way include SEL, PBIS, trauma-informed education, and restorative practices. This doesn’t mean these aren’t valuable programs. It just means they don’t identify or eliminate racism, which is what racial equity efforts should do.</p>	
<p>Poverty of Culture Detour Avoiding honestly addressing racism by focusing, instead, on vague notions of culture, as through frameworks like cultural competence and cultural proficiency. Racism is a power and oppression issue, not a culture issue. Cultural competence is important, but does not prepare us to recognize or eliminate racism. (Note: Some <i>culture</i>-framed approaches like culturally responsive, culturally relevant, and culturally sustaining education are built on racial equity commitments.)</p>	
<p>Individualizing Racism Detour Understanding and responding to racism only as interpersonal incidents, attitudes, or biases while ignoring institutional and structural racism. Adopting antibias approaches or studying microaggressions <i>instead of</i> antiracism approaches. Both are important, but is not sufficient for the goals of the latter.</p>	
<p>It’s About Class, Not Race Detour Denying that racism is an issue by insisting that class is the <i>real issue</i>. Conflating racial and class inequity, such as by using examples of class inequity as proxies for racial inequity.</p>	