

Parent Leaders - in their own words...

Tamara Wall - May 2024: *I am so grateful to PLTI for the opportunity to attend the Equity Now Metro Center Conference at NYU. To share a space with other like-minded parent leaders and educators while commemorating the importance and significance behind the 70-year anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education was both enlightening and refreshing.*



I appreciated networking and connecting with educators and administrators from around the country, as it reminded me that the issues we see with education far surpass the Rochester districts we advocate for.

It was such an honor to listen to (and later meet) Dr. Ghody Muhammad talk about the value and importance of including Joy in curriculum and the "heart check" she had us complete at the start of her keynote encouraged me to check myself in everything that I do around advocacy and DEI.

I attended a breakout session on "decolonizing SEL" and was given language for the behaviors and actions steeped in white supremacy that hinder growth and SEL development in schools today. This was particularly poignant for me as I recalled the experience many Black and Brown students have within the suburban districts in our area and how we can better support them.

For my second breakout session, I attended a session on culturally responsive restorative practices led by facilitators from The Children's Institute - Rochester, NY. It was great to see others around me engaged by the content from friends from my hometown and I walked away with additional tools to encourage restorative practices within my district AND my home.



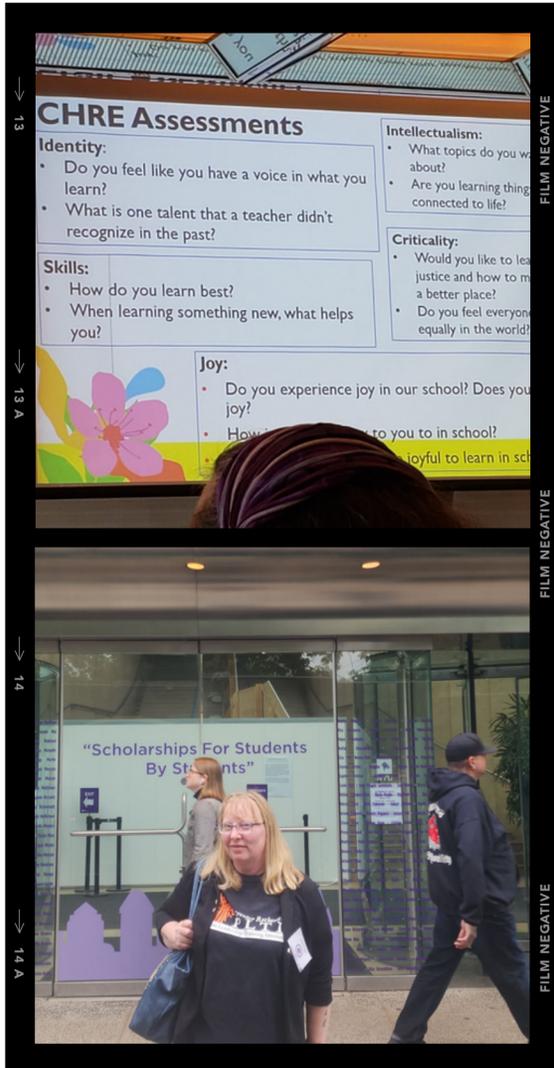
The panel discussion (led by Dr. Khalil G. Muhammad, whom I

later met) reinforced my beliefs that education systems need to take a more holistic approach when engaging in restorative practices. The focus should not be just about resolving an issue in that moment, but rather how do we ensure a child's needs are being met beyond that moment and the school walls. It also highlighted the importance of including children's voices in decision-making and restorative practice application.

My desire to continue doing the "hard work" to advocate for equity, inclusivity and wellness in education was reinvigorated with this conference - but, I've also been implored to do the "heart work" necessary internally to ensure I'm remaining effective and that my intentions stay centered on the most important reason behind what we do: the children.

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Elizabeth Maxwell- May 2024: *The Equity Now Conference was an experience like no other. The speakers, breakout sessions, and the networking there was so much to take in. Dr. Gholdy Muhammad said "Find the Joy." I took that in and digested it, for many reasons.*



Too often we look for failure, we look for the bad, but we overlook the joy. Joy can be so many things from the little success to just enjoying the nice weather. As changemakers it always important that we look at what needs improvement and find a "joy" that we can build on.

I included the picture at left because in schools kids, teachers, administrators are not using joy, let alone the 4 other pillars to success.

I chose to attend a restorative practices breakout and a listening breakout. I found that there was not much parent voice, but it brought a different lens to educators.

In the restorative practices breakout the biggest take away is learning if the foundation is not built. Restorative practices will not work without a community. Parents play a role in that community, too. Restorative practices are also antithetical to governments.

The listening workshop was helpful to making a larger connection to restorative practices but also to helping with other areas of life. We call it "active listening," but this was all about listening to hear, not to respond. It is so important that we listen because we can't make change if we only listen to respond. The key that I took away from this, for me it was different. I need to listen more when my child is over the top to

hear in her meltdown what need is not met, not what I need to do to stop everything in the moment.

Thank you PLTI!