

**Now What?
Confronting Uncomfortable
Truths About Inequity in Schools**

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Dedications

Carmella S. Franco:

I dedicate this book to my husband, Tom, who has stood with me through the tremendous time demands of all that transpired during the past decade. He was very supportive of the second book and knows that the career aspirations of the new cadre of leaders are dependent on those who have gone before. I also remember my late mother, who was there for me throughout my career and to whom I am eternally grateful.

Maria G. Ott:

This book is dedicated to my eight grandchildren: Clare, Ella, Moira, Miranda, Lucia, Julian, Joseph, and Annalise. Thank you for always asking intriguing questions and offering amazing insights about life and the world. You are sunlight and laughter and make me hopeful for the future.

Darline P. Robles:

This book is dedicated to three women: to my mother, Mary Ocampo Parra, and my grandmother Refugio Ocampo—who taught me the importance of family through their actions, courage, and unconditional love—and to my daughter, Lauren, who inspires me every day and gives me hope for the future. Through Lauren, I know our family legacy will live on—Adelante, Lauren!

Now What? Confronting Uncomfortable Truths About Inequity in Schools

A Leadership Rubric for Action

Carmella S. Franco

Maria G. Ott

Darline P. Robles

Foreword by Delores B. Lindsey
and Randall B. Lindsey

 CORWIN

Copyright ©2023 by SAGE Publications, Inc.

This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

FOR INFORMATION:

Corwin
A SAGE Company
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
(800) 233-9936
www.corwin.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
18 Cross Street #10-10/11/12
China Square Central
Singapore 048423

President: Mike Soules

Vice President and
Editorial Director: Monica Eckman

Program Director and Publisher: Dan Alpert

Senior Content Development
Editor: Lucas Schleicher

Content Development Editor: Mia Rodriguez

Editorial Intern: Ricardo Ramirez

Production Editor: Tori Mirsadjadi

Copy Editor: Megan Speer-Levi

Typesetter: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd.

Cover Designer: Rose Storey

Marketing Managers:

Olivia Bartlett and Melissa Duclos

Copyright © 2023 by Corwin Press, Inc.

All rights reserved. Except as permitted by U.S. copyright law, no part of this work may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

When forms and sample documents appearing in this work are intended for reproduction, they will be marked as such. Reproduction of their use is authorized for educational use by educators, local school sites, and/or noncommercial or nonprofit entities that have purchased the book.

All third-party trademarks referenced or depicted herein are included solely for the purpose of illustration and are the property of their respective owners. Reference to these trademarks in no way indicates any relationship with, or endorsement by, the trademark owner.

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Franco, Carmella S., author. | Ott, Maria G., author. | Robles, Darline P., author.

Title: Now what? confronting uncomfortable truths about inequity in schools: a leadership rubric for action / Carmella S. Franco, Maria G. Ott, Darline P. Robles.

Description: Thousand Oaks, California : Corwin, [2023] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022026712 | ISBN 9781071850763 (paperback) | ISBN 9781071850749 (epub) | ISBN 9781071850732 (epub) | ISBN 9781071850725 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: School management and organization—Social aspects—United States. | Educational equalization—United States. | Educational leadership—United States. | Multicultural education—United States. | Academic achievement—United States.

Classification: LCC LB2805 .F667 2023 | DDC 371.2/07—dc23
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022026712>

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

22 23 24 25 26 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

DISCLAIMER: This book may direct you to access third-party content via web links, QR codes, or other scannable technologies, which are provided for your reference by the author(s). Corwin makes no guarantee that such third-party content will be available for your use and encourages you to review the terms and conditions of such third-party content. Corwin takes no responsibility and assumes no liability for your use of any third-party content, nor does Corwin approve, sponsor, endorse, verify, or certify such third-party content.

CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Foreword by Delores B. Lindsey and Randall B. Lindsey | vii |
| Acknowledgments | ix |
| About the Authors | xiii |
| | |
| Chapter 1. Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 2. Cultural Proficiency: The Conceptual Framework and Tools | 7 |
| The Conceptual Framework as a Guide: The Four Tools of Cultural Proficiency | 9 |
| Chapter 3. The Executive Leadership Rubric: Lessons From the Field | 25 |
| Chapter 4. Case Stories as Lessons | 41 |
| Case Story One: Carmella S. Franco | 42 |
| Case Story Two: Maria G. Ott | 46 |
| Case Story Three: Darline P. Robles | 55 |
| Case Story for Application | 62 |
| Chapter 5. Planning for Equity | 69 |
| Your Next Steps: Analyze for Equity | 70 |
| Step One: Select Data From a Variety of Sources | 70 |
| Step Two: Disaggregate the Data by Significant Demographic Groups in Your School, District, and Community | 72 |
| Step Three: Study Longitudinal Data Over at Least a Five-Year Period | 74 |
| Step Four: Cross-Tabulate the Data for Demographic Groups by Socioeconomic Status, Ethnic Groups, and Language Fluency | 76 |
| Step Five: Arrange the Data So They Are Easily Read and Understood by Stakeholders | 77 |
| Step Six: Invite Stakeholders to Examine the Data | 80 |

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Step Seven: Use Data and Information That Stakeholders Collected to Explore Contributing Factors or Hypotheses | 83 |
| Step Eight: Use Stakeholder Input to Develop an Equity Plan to Guide Your Journey Forward | 85 |
| Conclusion: It Is What You <i>Do</i> That Matters | 88 |
| Chapter 6. Leadership for Transformation . . . The Time Is Now | 91 |
| The Context: Inflection Points and the Need for Activism | 92 |
| Knowledge: What Do You Already Know, and What Do You Need to Know? | 95 |
| Skill: What Can You Do, and What Must You Learn to Do? | 98 |
| Will: Do You Have the Will to Take the Journey to Cultural Proficiency? | 99 |
| Closing Thoughts | 102 |
| | |
| Appendix: Chapter 4 Supplement | 105 |
| References | 117 |
| Index | 119 |

Do not copy, post, or distribute

FOREWORD

Three Voices. One Message.

A decade ago, three Latina superintendents who served urban school districts in California published their first book, *A Culturally Proficient Society Begins in School: Leadership for Equity*. In those ten years, these three superintendents continued honing their craft by continuing their “hands-on work” in school districts that have been historically overlooked. Drs. Franco, Ott, and Robles continue their “hands-on” work in our schools and, just as important, make their presence known in state and national professional leadership organizations. As you will see when reading this important work, the authors hold as deep beliefs that all students have the capacity to learn and achieve at high levels and that our schools have the capacity to educate all children and youth to high levels. We are honored to have had the distinct pleasure to know and work with these remarkable leaders for more than twenty years.

Franco, Ott, and Robles characterized their first book as timely and relevant as they shared their experiences in moving schools and school districts to address individual and systemic inequities that fostered low engagement with communities and unacceptably low achievement of students. They are consistent in identifying leadership actions necessary to overcome barriers to student achievement and parent engagement.

Today, the authors frame the message in this book as urgent. They note that too many students and communities were left behind during the pandemic, which created an immediate shift to learning in virtual formats. *Now What? Confronting Uncomfortable Truths About Inequity in Schools* is a call to action. Using the Culturally Proficient Framework, the authors present case stories as successful models for implementation. The authors expertly provide a step-by-step template for leaders to use in designing and implementing actions intended to narrow access and achievement gaps for historically marginalized students in schools.

This book is written by leaders for leaders who are ready to act no matter how uncomfortable their current reality might be. The risks of inaction for our students are much too high to seek comfort in today's complex educational environment. The desired state for educational leaders must engage community, political, religious, law enforcement, mental health, and educational leaders in shared decision-making to overcome barriers for equitable schools, in both virtual and face-to-face experiences. No longer can we wait for the next crisis or the next best practice or the next expert to face our uncomfortable truths about inequities in schools. The field of education has experienced equity mandates and manipulations for well over fifty years. The time is now. Let's join these authors on this well-charted journey toward success for all learners.

Delores B. Lindsey, Retired Professor,
California State University San Marcos

Randall B. Lindsey, Emeritus Professor,
California State University, Los Angeles

Co-Founders, Center for Culturally Proficient Educational Practice

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are most appreciative of those who have supported and encouraged us in the writing of this new book. As such, it is important to thank and recognize those who have played a meaningful role in our lives, in particular during this past decade.

Carmella S. Franco

I have experienced a time of amazing professional achievements while also experiencing losses. That has been the story for many others also, and it is important that I include it here. In the first book, *A Culturally Proficient Society Begins in School: Leadership for Equity*, I included a brief excerpt about a dear couple, Nellie and David, community members who were there for me when I began my first principal position and who were supportive of all that I did in my educational consultant work. Sadly, Nellie and David were victims of COVID-19, and their loss is significant for me. I also lost my beloved mother, Margaret, a profound void in my life now, and my dear Aunt Marie, who I wrote about in the first book. This decade saw the passing of kind, supportive longtime friends Rocco Crupi and Joan Gazdik.

Even in a time of challenge and change in one's personal life, one must move forward. Thankfully, one individual and a solid rock for me, husband Tom Jackson, was a consistent beacon of encouragement in whatever door opened for me, and many doors opened during the past ten years. I acknowledge my dear friends and fellow authors, Maria and Darline, for wanting to join together as a trio in leaving the legacy of a second book. I am extremely grateful to Stephanie Graham, who was a tremendous resource and support during the writing of our book. I also want to acknowledge my family and friends for rallying behind me as I embarked on each new, exciting professional experience. I have found a niche in working with school boards and superintendents, both of whom have faced such incredible challenges with grace. It is gratifying to see the renewed commitment to vision and mission, all for the benefit of

students. After all, it is not about adults; it is about the students, the future leaders of our country. I love my work and approach it with enthusiasm and anticipation of positive results, and I want to continue making a difference in everything I do. In my eyes, this book is a symbol of hope for leaders who are trying to move their districts toward Cultural Proficiency and equity, and I am proud to be on this journey with them as an author.

Maria G. Ott

The journey to share what we know now that we didn't know then was possible because three very different women who share a common passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion came together in collaboration and willingness to learn and grow. Our respected colleague Stephanie Graham-Rivas was at our side during many difficult conversations to help us arrive at how we would tell the story behind this book. Special thanks to Carmella and Darline for joining me in this endeavor. We are like a Venn diagram where three distinct circles intersect, and it is in this intersection that our book resides.

I also thank my husband, Tom Ott, who had a difficult year due to health issues. Tenacious in fighting for recovery, he showed me that pain is part of life. When it seemed that this book would have to be put on hold, he encouraged me to push forward with my co-authors.

I have special appreciation for being part of an extraordinary university that encourages faculty to contribute to scholarly work. Former dean Karen Gallagher was an inspiration to me as she led the University of Southern California Rossier School of Education for twenty years and never lost her ability to innovate and challenge our thinking about how to promote equity and opportunity for all students. Dean Pedro Noguera arrived in 2019 and brought a sense of urgency to Rossier as he stepped in during a global pandemic. He is showing the way to be breakthrough educators and leaders. Inspiration and courage surround me at USC Rossier, and I know that I am fortunate to be part of a faculty team committed to social justice and preparing the next generation of change leaders.

Darline P. Robles

Since March 16, 2020, I have counted my blessings in knowing so many individuals who have been part of my family, friends, and colleagues throughout my career. I am forever grateful for your love and friendship. Special thanks and gratitude go to my family. To my husband, Frank, who has been by my side for over fifty years, guiding, supporting, and encouraging me to continue to fight for social justice. To my mother, who continues to provide our family with all the love and strength to inspire all of us to do better and be kind to

others. To my brother Lorenzo, who since childhood has been with me cheering me on. To my son, Lawrence, who provided examples from his own life about the inequities young Brown men face every day and how we must fight the injustices for all Brown and Black men. To my daughter, Lauren, who is a true gift in my life. I thank God every day for sending her to me as an example of what the future can be—an equity warrior who shows up every day, ready to take on the world for those less privileged than her. Lauren, you inspire me every day to do better. To those I have worked with in the past and work with today, thank you for your willingness to help me grow and be part of your lives. I can only do what I do because I have each of you in my life, and for that I will be forever grateful. I hope this book provides you with the guidance you need to act to make the educational system work for children who have not been served well by the system. If not you or me, then who?

We three authors are grateful beyond words to Stephanie Graham for her assistance with and caring guidance of our work. In our first book, she played a major role in the construction of the Cultural Proficiency Leadership Rubric. It was a joy to have Stephanie revisit with us the use of the rubric as a key signature piece of the journey to equitable practices.

PUBLISHER'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Corwin gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following reviewers:

Jeff Austin
Principal
Social Justice Humanitas Academy
Los Angeles, CA

Shannon Hobbs-Beckley
Director of Teaching and Learning
Graded—American School of São Paulo
São Paulo, Brazil

Lena Marie Rockwood
Assistant Principal
Revere Public Schools
Revere, MA

Tanna H. Nicely
Executive Principal
South Knoxville Elementary
Knoxville, TN

Do not copy, post, or distribute

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Carmella S. Franco taught and began her administrative work in the Rowland Unified School District, served as a principal in grades K–8 in Bassett Unified School District, and headed the Personnel Department in the Lennox School District. Dr. Franco was selected as superintendent of the Whittier City School District in 1996, serving twelve years at the helm of that district before retiring in 2008. She began an interim superintendent position in the Woodland Joint Unified School District located outside of Sacramento the very next day. Dr. Franco served as interim superintendent for the Compton Unified School District, and prior to that assignment, she was appointed by the State Board of Education to serve as the state trustee for the Alisal Union School District. She presently is a search consultant for Hazard Young Attea & Associates in California, helping school boards with their superintendent searches, and at the state level, Dr. Franco served for fourteen years as one of the directors of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Superintendents Academy.

Dr. Franco's personal motto "Making a difference in everything I do" has not changed since she entered the field of education and is still relevant now as she is a consultant with a specialty in governance. Throughout her career, Dr. Franco has worked for the good of her colleagues, often using her volunteer involvement in professional organizations, and has served as president

Dr. Franco's personal motto "Making a difference in everything I do" has not changed since she entered the field of education and is still relevant now as she is a consultant with a specialty in governance. Throughout her career, Dr. Franco has worked for the good of her colleagues, often using her volunteer involvement in professional organizations, and has served as president

of a number of them, including ACSA Region 14, California City School Superintendents, and the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators. She was recognized as a founding member of the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents and received its Lifetime Achievement Award. Currently, she sits on the boards of the YMCA of Greater Whittier and the Rio Hondo College Foundation. Whether it is coordinating the recognition of local teachers or helping award scholarships to deserving community college students, Dr. Franco finds the work to be fulfilling and a commitment to the future.

Dr. Franco is an alumna of California State University at Los Angeles (CSULA), where she graduated cum laude with a degree in music and a master's degree in elementary education, and also earned two credentials. Her doctorate in nontraditional negotiation methods was received from the University of La Verne (ULV). She has lectured in the past at both CSULA and ULV in the area of educational administration and is a mentor in the USC Rossier Urban Superintendents' Academy. A book co-authored by Dr. Franco and her two colleagues Dr. Maria G. Ott and Dr. Darline P. Robles, titled *A Culturally Proficient Society Begins in School: Leadership for Equity*, was published in September 2011.



Maria G. Ott holds the Irving R. and Virginia A. Melbo Chair in Education Administration at the USC Rossier School of Education. Dr. Ott served for more than forty years as an educator in K–12 urban school systems, including fourteen years as a superintendent and five years as senior deputy superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Her transition to higher education was an opportunity to apply her experiences to the preparation of leaders for school systems, colleges and universities, and other organizations.

Dr. Ott designed and launched the USC Rossier Urban Superintendents Academy in 2015 in partnership with AASA to prepare diverse and equity-minded leaders for K–12 school system leadership. She serves as a member of the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS) Board of Directors to promote the goal of advancing diverse leaders

who work to close opportunity and achievement gaps for Latino youth. She was honored with the 2021–2022 ALAS Lifetime Achievement Award and received the USC Rossier Dean’s Superintendents Advisory Group (DSAG) Achievement Award in 2017. Dr. Ott is recognized for her leadership and advocacy for bilingual education and programs for English-language learners, leadership development for women, and public-private partnerships in education. She is a founding member of the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA) and ALAS.

Her work on Cultural Proficiency is detailed in her book, *A Culturally Proficient Society Begins in School: Leadership for Equity*, with co-authors Carmella S. Franco and Darline P. Robles. Dr. Ott has presented to national audiences on the topic of her book and continues to contribute to the educational literature about the importance of Cultural Proficiency in closing achievement gaps.



Darline P. Robles is the associate dean of the Office of Equity and Community Engagement and a professor of clinical education at the Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California. She teaches in the EdD educational leadership program and is the faculty adviser for the preliminary administrator credential under professional development. She also serves as a co-director of the Center on Education Policy, Equity and Governance. Dr. Robles serves as Rossier’s diversity liaison to the University of Southern California diversity and inclusion efforts.

Prior to joining the faculty at Rossier, Dr. Robles served eight years as the first Latina county superintendent of the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), the nation’s largest regional service agency. LACOE serves more than two million preschool and school-age children, of whom 60 percent are Latino. As chief of the Salt Lake City School District from 1995 to 2002, she was recognized for raising student achievement. Prior to her position in the Salt Lake City School District, she served as superintendent of the

Montebello Unified School District in California, where she began her teaching career. While superintendent, she saved the district from a state takeover. Her career has focused on serving underserved students and inspiring and mentoring young Latino educators.

Dr. Robles was named twice as one of *Hispanic Business* magazine's Top 100 Influential Hispanic Americans. In 2010 she was named to President Obama's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. Recent recognitions include the Education Medal from the Lucille and Edward R. Roybal Foundation in 2019 and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Community Service in 2022.

Dr. Robles is committed to public service and serves on many local and national boards. She presents to national audiences on leadership and Cultural Proficiency and is a leadership consultant to school districts and non-profit organizations.

CHAPTER 1

.....

INTRODUCTION

“The goal is not to be better than the other man, but better than your previous self.”

Dalai Lama XIV

Our first book was written to share our experiences as three Latina superintendents who led urban school districts and navigated the ladder to success during the lingering misogyny and racism of the twenty-first century. It was intended to motivate others to do the crucial work of moving organizations to address inequalities, attitudes, and behaviors that perpetuate inequalities. The book supported leaders in moving their systems forward by developing an awareness of the need for change and a commitment to Cultural Proficiency. The book was timely and relevant.

A lot has stayed the same, and so much has changed since 2011. At the ten-year anniversary of the book *A Culturally Proficient Society Begins in School: Leadership for Equity*, a second book is **urgent**. The national divide over important social, economic, and political issues has never been greater, and the threats to our democracy and Constitution have never been more real. Fractured government, threats to voter freedom, social upheaval, an ongoing and mutating pandemic, conspiracy theories, and lies and half-truths from government leaders—all fueled by ever-present partisan media sources, including unchecked social media—have brought this nation to important crossroads of crisis. No institution has been more affected than public education. As a microcosm of society, public education as we know it and its near-total collapse during the pandemic has hit families and communities hard. Schools and the public they serve had to rethink the entire teaching/learning enterprise, including the delivery of many public services to families.

The glaring inequity in schools pre-pandemic has been made worse, as too many students and families were further left behind by inadequate resources for online learning and a lack of other resources and support services that students and families most in need count on for their well-being and survival. While most students suffered educational lags during the pandemic, some students were affected more than others. As a result, some students have fallen woefully behind academically, have dropped out, are lacking credits to graduate or transfer to college, or have simply fallen off our radar screens. Even if schooling were to get back to pre-pandemic standards, too many students lost too much for too long for even the most compassionate and capable of us to help them catch up. We should not be surprised that the most vulnerable students during this time represent members of the same student demographic groups that have been, and who continue to be, the most underserved in our society. These are largely students of color, English learners, economically disadvantaged students, migrant students, and students with special needs. The access, opportunity, and achievement gaps most significant for these groups have grown deeper and will continue to widen unless compassionate and committed individuals conduct some form of concerted and calculated triage to prioritize treatment and intervention. The times call for educational and other public leaders to confront this challenge, take risks, and do whatever it takes to arrest the loss of progress for too many students who matter. As a microcosm of society, schools can lead the way to teach other social institutions how to arrest and reverse the injustices made worse by current events. This is a time for an urgent response. We intend for this book to be a call to action for educational, religious, civic, and private advocates at the local and national levels to engage in, commit to, and address the urgent challenges ahead of us.

A book can be seen as simply one's point of view . . . as ideas on a page. We intend for this book to be a clarion call to move beyond words and bold conversations to action, and we invite our readers to join us on the journey. In addition to presenting a call to action, another important purpose of this book is to provide educational leaders with a lens, a framework, and a set of tools to assess and address educational inequities in communities today. We acknowledge the many leaders who already are on board and skilled for this work, but we also recognize that the work is hard and that even the loudest, most capable advocates need new conversations, fresh ideas and approaches, and renewed motivation to bolster their work. The final purpose of this book is to create an ongoing community of bold thinkers and activists to share and support each other in this work. We do not know all there is to know; however, we have learned many things on our journeys. We know things now that we did not know ten years ago, and we look forward to sharing those lessons with you. We will enhance the tools we share with our readers with lived lessons and perspectives from our work in the field and personal case stories. We invite you to apply your own knowledge and analyses to further inform and contribute to the collective knowledge we all

need to sustain this work. This is work that calls for all of us to come together to share ideas and best practices to support each other through difficult times. We welcome you on board!

We introduced readers to the Culturally Proficient Framework and tools in our first book. The framework is an organizer for understanding how to use four specific tools of Cultural Proficiency to begin and guide your work for creating and sustaining equity-based practices in your organizations. Chapter 2 will review the framework and tools in an updated context.

Furthermore, readers may recall that this work begins and is sustained with a mind shift that reflects how people think, talk, and act in an emerging equity culture. One of the guiding principles of Cultural Proficiency states, “People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture.” This principle is important for us to understand as educators because it explains the beginnings of the access, achievement, and opportunity gaps that plague underserved communities across this nation. Narrowing and closing these gaps is the ultimate goal of Cultural Proficiency.

- The above guiding principle of Cultural Proficiency provides the moral imperative for conducting this work at both the personal and organizational levels.
- The Cultural Proficiency Continuum and, specifically in this book, the Cultural Proficiency Leadership Rubric that we present and discuss in Chapters 3 and 4 give us a common language to discuss difficult, often controversial, topics in a non-contentious manner and provide examples of ineffective and effective practices to guide our transformation for inclusion and equity. This in turn stimulates conversation and provides a place for individuals of all backgrounds, racial groups, ethnicities, and identities to examine their personal and organizational positions on the continuum, assess the current status quo, and identify next steps to make progress toward Cultural Proficiency and closing educational gaps.
- Another tool, the five essential elements of Cultural Proficiency, provides behavioral standards to guide culturally competent leaders as they address current societal and organizational challenges. The five essential elements of Cultural Proficiency are as follows:
 - Assessing culture (one’s own and others)
 - Valuing diversity
 - Managing the dynamics of difference
 - Adapting to diversity
 - Institutionalizing cultural knowledge

All the tools within the Culturally Proficient Framework, which we will discuss in more detail in Chapter 2, provide leaders with a toolkit for examining, discussing, and making changes to policies and practices to better meet the needs of communities during this historic time when there is a national effort to focus on issues of equity and inclusion. In addition, our lived experiences, as expressed in this book, can be used in training and staff development sessions to engage in constructive conversations about difficult and sensitive topics and to examine the particular applications of Cultural Proficiency as revealed in our case stories and the Cultural Proficiency Leadership Rubric in Chapter 4.

We begin by reintroducing ourselves and updating what has transpired in our professional lives in the past decade.

Carmella S. Franco completed her tenure as a state trustee of a takeover school district in Monterey County. Franco's work with governance has included districts with a majority of lower-socioeconomic, underserved students. She is recognized for assisting districts that are experiencing difficult situations. Professional presentations with co-authors Ott and Robles and others have centered on advancing the numbers of women of color in leadership positions throughout the country. She serves as a superintendents' coach and adviser and a mentor to aspiring superintendents of color for a number of organizations, including the AASA-USC Rossier Urban Superintendents Academy.

Maria G. Ott joined the University of Southern California Rossier School of Education as a faculty member upon retirement from the superintendency and currently holds the Irving R. and Virginia A. Melbo Chair in Education Administration. Her transition to higher education was an opportunity to prepare leaders for school systems, higher education, and organizations serving society in the nonprofit and for-profit environments. Ott designed and launched the AASA-USC Rossier Urban Superintendents Academy in 2015 to prepare diverse and equity-minded leaders for K–12 system leadership. She is recognized for her leadership and advocacy for bilingual education, leadership development for women, and public-private partnerships in education, and serves as a board member for the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS).

Darline P. Robles was a superintendent for twenty years. With her last appointment, she served as superintendent of the Los Angeles County Office of Education, the largest educational service region in the country. She left the superintendency to join the faculty at the Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California, to create a new master's in education

focused on K–12 leadership and preparation for the administrator’s credential. She also serves as the associate dean for Equity and Community Engagement, where she provides support and training to faculty and staff on issues of access, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, she is the diversity liaison to the university and is a member of the university’s Cultural Journey Network. She continues to teach in the K–12 and higher education doctoral program focused on preparing school leaders to become strategic leaders with an equity mindset.

We are not the same leaders/authors of our first book. As you will read, what we know now that we didn’t know then has fortified our approach and emboldened our message. We hope that our experiences and lessons will unfold in such a way to not only guide your progress but accelerate it as we share with you things we wish we knew when we began this journey ten years ago. The rest of this book provides further insight into the following ten lessons that we share with our readers.

1. The status quo and the false belief in a meritocracy work against inclusivity in all sectors of society, not just education.
2. Equity issues are civil rights issues; it is your duty as a public servant to confront them and help make lasting change.
3. Develop an anti-racist stance. Anti-racism is not the same thing as not being racist. Confront all forms of oppression, not just those that you know or care about the most. Create understanding about the generational trauma, bigotry, and oppression of all oppressed groups, including LGBTQ and gender-fluid populations.
4. Step out of your comfort zone. Confront racism and oppression and other brutal facts directly. Do not obfuscate issues with rhetoric or politically correct language. Support claims with data, not predominance of opinion. Advocacy is required of all equity leaders. Often activism is needed. Expect pushback and criticism. Do not try to avoid it; manage it. Accept the consequences of bold action, but seek support from key constituents ahead of time and during your equity campaign.
5. Assume everyone’s best intentions, but make sure committees and decision-making groups share appropriate representation from the communities you serve to ensure that groups’ issues are not misrepresented, silenced, or ignored.

(Continued)

(Continued)

6. Examine your own cultural identity(s), i.e., cultural membership and status, as an ongoing process. Who are your allies, and whom do you unintentionally oppress with your ignorance, words, thoughts, or actions? Take responsibility for challenging your own shortcomings and biases. Consider the extent to which you, yourself, are an obstacle to change.
7. Expect fatigue and battle scars. Address your emotional needs and the emotional needs of friends and colleagues who help you do this work. Have mentors and allies to guide and support you. Take informed risks. Do not be afraid to make and admit mistakes.
8. Develop the next generation of leaders. By developing leadership in others, you demonstrate effective executive leadership yourself, and you establish the groundwork for institutionalizing change across the organization.
9. Understand that becoming culturally proficient is not just something you do at work. It is a lifelong personal experience for evolving your humanity on this planet. Embrace the process. Just because you will never finish the work does not mean you are excused from starting it.
10. Becoming culturally proficient is an inside-out approach. It is not something the leader does *to* others, nor is it something they delegate. The executive leader holds and communicates the vision for the work, directs the work, understands the work, participates in the work, and is ultimately responsible for the outcomes.