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**Media Contact**

Mike Raia, NAIL[PR] for Equity

Institute 401.340.9425 |

[mraia@nailpr.cc](mailto:mraia@nailpr.cc)

## **New Nonprofit Aims to Build Culturally Responsive Schools and Communities**

*Equity Institute expands on EduLeaders of Color mission, offers culturally responsive education training and labs for districts and schools in Rhode Island and across New England*

**PROVIDENCE, RI** – As school districts across New England begin a new school year, education advocates across Rhode Island are debating the most effective approaches to improve educational outcomes in the state and its capital city. A new nonprofit launched this week to ensure that reform efforts in Providence and throughout New England address cultural responsiveness and equity to improve outcomes for students of color. **Equity Institute** advocates for systemic change at the state, district and school level by facilitating organizational development, recruiting and supporting talented leaders of color, and offering equity workshops and training for districts and organizations designed to build culturally responsive learning environments and workplaces.

Equity Institute was founded by Karla Vigil and Carlon Howard and builds on the success of their EduLeaders of Color meet ups and advocacy.

“Districts and schools cannot begin to personalize learning without including students’ identities at the forefront of their work. Equity Institute will advocate for and guide districts and schools to make systemic changes that expand opportunity for the state’s most underserved students and communities,” said **Karla Vigil**, co-founder of Equity Institute. “Educators of color are more likely to leave the profession than other teachers, even as our districts are becoming more diverse every year. Equity Institute will help districts and schools develop culturally responsive practices necessary to teach students of all backgrounds, and we’ll work with state and local leaders to ensure that equity, inclusion, and culturally-responsive teaching are central components of teacher recruitment, development, and retention efforts.”

“Education needs to be more than test results, especially when you consider the gaps between students of color and their classmates. Equity and culturally responsive practices must be a part of our educational framework in Rhode Island and across New England,” said **Carlon Howard**, co-founder of Equity Institute. “Three years ago, Karla and I hosted the first EduLeaders of Color meetup and sparked a conversation that’s grown to include educators, administrators, elected officials, education advocates and business leaders. Our aim with Equity Institute is to create equitable school environments that give every staff member in every district the support, training, and tools to become culturally proficient and meet their students’ diverse needs.”

Equity Institute offers innovative design labs and workshops that empower teachers and administrators as the designers of their school communities. It also advises public policy aimed to ensure that teacher recruitment, development, and retention measures account for equity and cultural competence and continues the networking and mentorship opportunities that nurtures an ecosystem for leaders of color through the EduLeaders initiative.

Equity Institute is supported with grants from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and Rhode Island Foundation and receives other philanthropic support. Karla Vigil is available to local and regional media as a subject matter expert on school reform and culturally responsive practices in education.

For more information, visit [www.theequityinstitute.org](http://www.theequityinstitute.org).