Practitioners Advance Equity and Access

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Hill, S., & Vance, F. (Eds.). (2019). *Changemakers! Practitioners advance equity and access in out-of-school time programs.* Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

The out-of-school time (OST) field aims to provide high-quality learning experiences to all youth, especially those who have often been marginalized or excluded. However, organizational structures and funding, among other factors, have not kept pace with the needs of diverse youth populations. In *Changemakers,* editors Sara Hill and Femi Vance have collected an engaging set of essays highlighting how OST practitioners and systems are meeting the challenges of equity and access. This book is the latest entry in the series Current Issues on Out-of-School Time, edited by Helen Janc Malone.

As Hill and Vance point out in their introduction, equity and access are important values in the OST field. They explain that *equity* results "when young people have the tools, resources, and other supports they need to achieve desired outcomes such as self-sufficiency and well-being" (p. 3). *Access* "refers to ensuring that OST programs are available in all communities and that youth and their families know about them" (p. 4). Using these definitions, the book examines issues ranging from funding, outreach, and organizational structure to programming for specific groups of youth.

Unifying the voices and content can be a challenge when compiling a book with multiple authors. Hill and Vance succeed in creating a clear roadmap and an easy-to-navigate structure. The introduction articulates the main theme and offers chapter summaries. The rest of the book is divided into two sections. The first, "shaping organizations for access and equity," explores organizational policy and structure. Topics include equity at legacy organizations, equitable partnerships, youth outreach and retention, funding, and access for disabled youth. The second section, "equity through

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critical practice," addresses "point-of-service quality," or how professionals address equity and access when working directly with youth. Topics include critical youth development, programs for boys and young men of color, and one museum's role in serving immigrant families.

A common chapter format further unifies the varied voices and topics of the book. Each chapter opens with a personal account or experience and then moves into description and analysis. Each ends with research questions provided by the editors. These research questions elegantly achieve several goals. First, they encourage the practitioner–researcher collaborations Hill and Vance call for. Second, they invite readers to continue questioning and exploring. Finally, they acknowledge that there is much work to do but offer direction for next steps.

Far from being just a theoretical discussion of the complex issues, this book offers concrete strategies and solutions. The book's real-life examples are refreshing and inspiring reminders that change not only is possible but is also happening right now. Kathryn Sharpe gives specific strategies to mitigate implicit bias at legacy organizations—strategies that can be applied to other settings as well. Ken Anthony highlights six guidelines for developing and sustaining partnerships. Several authors discuss the potential of professional learning communities as a strategy. Merle McGee details activities that can be used with program participants in critical youth development practice. The examples go on. Rather than feeling overwhelmed by the challenges of equity and access, readers can be inspired by the many ways program are achieving change.

Anyone in the OST or allied youth fields can find this book engaging, thought-provoking, and useful. The stated audience for the first section is OST professionals who manage programs or who need to articulate these issues and advocate for equity and access. (In other words, all of us!) The second section targets current, former, and aspiring OST professionals and "those who shape the environment in which learning takes place" (p. 7). Researchers are another main audience; the editors stress the importance of building research–practitioner collaborations.

As Hill and Vance note, this book is not an exhaustive exploration of all obstacles to access and equity. They specifically point out the need for exploration of equity and access for youth who identify as LGBTQ, rural youth, and young people in foster care. In fact, the critical practice section has only three chapters, as compared to five in the organizational structure section. There is indeed room for more practice examples to highlight unaddressed topics. However, the separation of sections, though it provides a helpful structure for readers, is somewhat arbitrary. In the first section, authors discussing organizational structure also offer ideas about daily youth work practice. For example, Rachel Loeper, in her chapter about funding, highlights several point-of-service strategies for outreach and retention, such as offering flexible programming and multiple levels of engagement. Meanwhile, authors of the critical practice chapters offer insights about structural equity and access. For example, Jon Gilgoff's chapter about programming for boys and young men of color discusses the contribution of macro-level policies and practices such as developing a responsive OST workforce. The editors acknowledge the importance of addressing both structural and practice areas simultaneously; as I read, I was reminded that they are difficult to separate.

Intentionally bringing the enormous expertise of practitioners to the forefront is perhaps the greatest strength of this volume. Each author generously shares the background, experiences, and personal identities that inform their perspective. In modeling this vulnerability, they invite all of us to do the same—and to think about the challenges and solutions we can see and act upon. This invitation is ultimately why the book is so compelling.

In spite of the complexity and depth of the challenges of equity and access, *Changemakers* is a hopeful book, one that leaves us not only with a desire to take action, but also with some concrete ideas of how to do so. Ashoka, the network of social entrepreneurs that coined the book's title term, uses the slogan "everyone a changemaker." This idea of universal agency is implicit throughout the book: Everyone has the power to see a problem and make change. Just as talent among youth is not a limited resource, so changemakers are not limited in number. The authors leave us feeling educated, hopeful, and empowered to make change.