Equity Today: The Region VIII EAC Podcast  
Episode 202 – “African American Students in Urban Schools Conference”

The Region VIII Equity Assistance Center at Metropolitan Statue University of Denver is guided by its vision to provide, upon request, technical assistance, training, and staff development for school boards, school districts, tribal education agencies, charter schools, and other responsible government agencies. We strive to promote equitable education opportunities and access for all students. We seek to improve equity, access, and participation and high quality, research-based opportunities for all students. We work to reduce disparities between and among groups where they may arise.

Tyler: Hello, and welcome to Equity Today, the EAC region VIII Podcast. I’m Tyler, and I’m sitting here with Amber Mozet and today we’re going to discuss an upcoming conference that the EAC is hosting, what are, what would you say we’re doing?

Amber: Sponsoring.

T: Sponsoring!

A: We’re one of the two major sponsors of this conference.

T: OK! Well, tell me about it.

A: OK, so the conference is titled, “African American Students in Urban Schools Conference; Critical Issues and Solutions of Achievement.” And this is a collaboration between the Region VIII Equity Assistance Center, and the Urban Education Collaborative at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where our Grant External Evaluator, Dr. Chance Lewis is based at, and between him and Kathy Rigsby, our director here at the Equity Assistance Center, they put their heads together on an event that we could do together with a focus on African American students.

T: That’s awesome. That’s really cool that we’re kind of reaching out over to the coast, at least one of the coasts, here with our work. It’s nice. Not totally landlocked here in Colorado!

A: No, we’re trying to, you know, be as equitable as we can, and we definitely, you know, that’s what we’re looking for for this national conference, is representation from everywhere in America.

T: That’s really good, that’s awesome. So what kind of speakers, what kind of representations are we going to see at this?
A: I can tell you about two of the keynoters who are going to be presenting at the conference. The other folks have not been 100% confirmed, so I don’t want to give out any details until later, that will be a podcast for the future.

T: Yes.

A: But most folks will definitely recognize their names. Dr. Donna Ford from Vanderbilt University, and Dr. Ivory Toldson from Howard University, who are both in depth in the education and their focus is urban education, also with a tie to African American students, just based on the work they’re doing.

T: Awesome. So it sounds like the focus of this conference is kind of like our focus in the center, which is just to promote equity for all people of whatever race or national origin.

A: Exactly.

T: This one is specifically focusing on young African American students in America.

A: Yes.

T: OK, and what are some of the goals we hope to achieve by bringing people together for this?

A: One, well, more outreach about the work that the center does and resources that are available for educators; our focus is really to get school teachers, administrators, principals, school district board members, all the way up to university professors who are teaching future teachers, we want to bring all these folks together on to the same table to speak about the different challenges or opportunities they will face while dealing with African American students in particular. Because, while a lot of the challenges that all groups face, poverty being one for example, some of the challenges that we’re going to be discussing at this conference will be tailored directly for teachers dealing with African American students.

T: OK, awesome. Alright, and then, we should certainly say, when is the conference, where is the conference?

A: Yes. So the conference is coming up, really quickly, it’s May 14th through the 16th. It will be held at the Sheraton Denver West hotel, and we have all that information on our website.

T: Yeah, there will be plenty of links to the registration and all that good stuff in the notes for the show. Let’s see, what else...

A: Well, this conference, it’s not an annual conference, but Kathy Rigsby, our director, had the grant, had the Equity Assistance Center Grant back in 2006 up in
CSU Fort Collins, they held the same conference, or the same idea that they turn into a conference, and so this is really where it’s coming from, is Chance at that time was still a grad student, and now, I mean, it’s a really wonderful testament to the work that he’s done professionally, that one point he was the grad student and now his department is co-sponsoring this national conference.

T: That’s really cool.

A: He’s just a nice guy, really bright.

T: Very on-point it seems. That’s awesome.

A: And is obviously noticing that this is an area that folks may not be paying as close as attention to as we are with other ethnic groups or ethnicities or backgrounds.

T: Yeah. I know we’ve touched on this in the past, but it seems like there’s a lot of people who seem to think that hardships for African American citizens has ended and it’s just simply is not even close to true, and so it’s good to keep that awareness.

A: Exactly. And obviously most people have seen the census 2010 information that came out that talked about the shift in the population with growing numbers of Hispanic or latino population and that makes sense too, but we can’t move forward if we’re only moving one group forward. We need to move all of the children in k12 schools forward to reach some of the goals that President Obama has put forth, about graduation levels and bachelor degrees. You know you don’t move forward if you leave out ...

T: Anybody, if you leave anybody out. We’re only as strong as our weakest link, and equity is a pretty weak link in this country so we should certainly be trying on all fronts.

A: It’s an interesting conversation I think, I mean people, you know, like you said, about “well, if President Obama is elected, then there’s no hardships for African American people,” and I think that people just, they forget equity, or they assume because it’s 2013, that’s fine, that people are getting an equitable treatment everywhere including education but also in day to day life.

T: Which simply is not always true, unfortunately. But that is why we’re here, that is what the conference is for.

A: Yes, exactly.

T: Students, and it’s cliché, quite literally children are our future so if we can lay a good foundation when they’re in that very malleable state then we can set ourselves up for a much nicer retirement.
A: We can do good things.

T: Yes, hopefully. I think so.

A: The last thing I definitely want to mention in this podcast is we are heading up on our facebook and twitter pages. On twitter we have our own hashtag for this conference, it is #aastudentconf.

T: Awesome, well we will be posting some more information about that in the future, so look for posts with that hashtag from us. I, are we doing any kind of specials for early registration or anything like that?

A: Yes, yes. Thank you for mentioning that. We do have an early bird rate that is good, valid through March 15, so exactly one month from today, and it’s for 350. So $350 dollars is the early bird rate. Then starting March 16 through April 30, the rate goes up to $400, and I am hoping that we will sell this conference out, and registration will be closed at the end of April, if not before.

T: Awesome. OK, so, if you’re interested, then definitely, the early bird rate is not only a better price, but will guarantee you a spot, which is important. Just kind of looking at the nitty gritty, what are people getting for their money when they register for the conference?

A: Well, access to all of the speakers that are going to be there; we’re going to have some very interesting and innovative breakout sessions with lots of takeaways, so you can actually turn around and use this stuff in your classroom Monday when you get back to work.

T: That’s awesome.

A: We’re looking into some other sort of swag things, I guess, is the general term to use, it’s going to be worth it. Food’s going to be great. The venue is wonderful, the Sheraton Denver West is pretty accessible to most folks. It’s just off of 6th avenue, which is a smaller highway here in Denver, but it gets its traffic. The nice thing about the hotel too, is, if you are from the Denver Metro area, which, we want to make sure that Denver is well represented there, the light rail station will be opening up, the one that goes to Colorado Mills, to Lakewood, will be opening up just a few weeks prior to our conference, so people will be able to access that.

T: Oh, OK, so plenty of good transportation there.

A: It’s located on buslines, I mean, we try to look at lots of ways for people to get to the hotel, get to the meeting.

T: OK. And are we going to be recording any of the speakers’ addresses?
A: That hasn’t been 100% ironed out, but I know we’re going to try to do some one off interview podcasts sort of like this and have some in depth conversations with some of the speakers. Like I said, the real basic stuff about the registration and the location, and my contact information is on our website and is also on the conference website too.

T: Yeah, and the EAC information is always in the podcast show notes so you will have our email address and our phone number and our website and again a link to the registration and information for this conference, and I might, will probably find some links to relevant works by the keynote speakers, so we can have those going too. Awesome, well it sounds like really important good stuff. It’s a continuation of some work that sounds like it got planted a few years back. Did they, they saw good things happen the first time?

A: They, so the last time they hosted the conference, they had about 2 months to actually plan everything, and it was actually like a real grassroots sort of initiative that they did, and the response was wonderful.

T: Awesome.

A: They got, they packed, they sold out of registration spots, they had to turn people away at the door, and we just really want to replicate that, because we’ve had some more planning time, and the magic is there again.

T: We can do it. Awesome.

A: Knock on wood, we hope to see each and every one of our listeners there.

T: Absolutely. So, early registration rates good up to March 15, and then the conference itself is going to be May 14-16 of this year at the Sheraton Denver West. Cool, yes, well, as always if you have any questions feel free to contact us, the number at the office is 303-5566065 so you can always reach us that way or eac@msudenver.edu. Thank you so much for telling us about this!

A: You’re welcome.

T: If you would like to contact the Region VIII Equity Assistance Center, you may do so at our website, metrostate-eac.org, phone 303-556-6065, or via email, at eac@msudenver.edu. Listeners are also invited to join the conversation by following us on twitter @EACRegion8, or by liking the Equity Assistance Center Region VIII facebook page. Special thanks to the band Northbound for the use of their song Forward in this podcast. Thank you.