



improving learning resources
through diversity

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INNOVATION THROUGH INCLUSION Improving Learning Resources Through Diversity

AEP inaugurates a new era in working with its members to *reflect* and *serve* the diversity of our nation's schools. Innovation Through Inclusion (ITI) is our new banner for this effort.

What does “Innovation Through Inclusion” Mean?

Schools are moving through a period of incredible change...perhaps disruptive change. The same is true for all media and for its subset, the educational resources industry. Companies that find ways to get outside their conventional thinking and become part of this disruption will be tomorrow's leaders. Attracting a higher volume of human capital from under-represented categories is a proven way to inject innovative thinking into a company's culture.

What is diversity?

Diversity involves recruiting and retaining human talent at all levels with a focus on bringing more from groups that are under-represented in the organization, usually defined by ethnic, national or minority status; gender; religion; sexual orientation; and disability.

What is inclusion?

Inclusion involves shaping a company's culture and practices in a way that attracts and integrates contributions from a diverse spectrum of company talent.

Why do American companies promote diversity and inclusion?

- *Moral imperative.* In some ways the story of the modern age is one of repressed peoples finding their way into full participation in society. To help assure their future, industries want to be on the right side of this historical movement.
- *Attract the best talent.* While growing, the pool of experienced minority talent is still limited relative to the proportion in the majority population. Companies that can win a larger share of minority talent, especially at managerial levels, will do a better job of attracting minority candidates overall.
- *Customers expect it.* AEP members serve large school districts with big buying power, ethnically diverse populations, and minorities in leadership positions. Companies that do the best job of visibly increasing minority participation will have a big advantage in retaining their respect, confidence and future buys.

- *Improve the quality of products and services.*
 - Culturally sensitive resources. A more ethnically diverse staff can develop, sell and support resources that will resonate more effectively with the ethnic audience they serve.
 - In general, resources developed and sold by an organization that practices inclusion will have better prospects for effectiveness because of the innovation principle: diversity in people helps lead to breakthroughs in thinking.

Why is this effort needed for our industry?

In the midst of economic turmoil, the nation’s attention to educational outcomes has never been higher. Test scores, college performance, and pursuit of challenging careers are declining or stalling for many populations. All elements of the school system—schools, teachers and resources—are undergoing unprecedented scrutiny. In order to gain the confidence of the schools they serve during this turbulent time, schools are likely to award more business to companies that demonstrate through inclusion and innovation that they can be a positive force for educational change.

“Economic buying power today sits in the hands of people who demand an understanding of their experience and background.” (*The New York Times Magazine*, 9.11.11)

Whom do we mean to include?

- *Gender.* Compared to industry norms, educational resources has a good gender diversity record. While more gender progress is desirable, many education companies were founded by women, and women are well represented in senior executive roles. One gender issue for our industry is that men are a declining share of those building product content that comes closest to touching the student. In sum, we need more women in some roles, and more men in others.
- *Ethnic and racial.* This is where our industry has the greatest challenge. Hispanic, African-American, and Asian populations are becoming the new majority in schools whose enrollments are a leading indicator of where the total population is headed. Yet these groups represent fewer than 10% of our staffs. The gross ethnic imbalance between the end-users (students) we serve and the people we employ is the single greatest challenge we face in our drive for inclusion.
- Other under-represented groups include those identified by sexual orientation and disability.

What’s happened to the old slogan: ILRTD (Improving Learning Resources Through Diversity?)

Nothing at all. ITI still aims to improve learning resources. Here’s why:

- Culturally rich learning resources that are relevant and engaging can improve learning outcomes, particularly among at-risk students.
- An educational publishing industry that mirrors the diversity of America’s classrooms is essential if the goal of educational equity is to be met.
- A diverse industry workforce will increase the power of its materials to engage diverse students, as well as help reduce unintended cultural bias.

How is AEP helping the industry make “Diversity AYP” (Adequate Yearly Progress)?

Over the period 2010-11 AEP has

- Secured a pilot program grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- Operated a trial recruitment program
- Formed a Diversity Advisory Board to deliver advice and perspectives that guide our efforts
- Formed a Diversity Committee to debate and implement action steps
- Secured a Diversity Leadership Consultant to ensure steady progress and funding, and serve as a bridge to future internal program management
- Developed a 3-year plan from these inputs

<i>Three-Year Plan Components</i>	<i>Year 1</i>	<i>Year 2</i>	<i>Year 3</i>
Conduct field activity (e.g., campus recruitment)		X	X
Rebuild website & expand social networks	X	X	X
Award scholarships		X	X
Conduct internship program Pilot Roll out		X	X
Build online info clearinghouse	X		
Contribute to leadership development		X	X
Conduct research	X		
Solicit volunteers	X		
Hire staff		X	X
Secure funding	X	X	

Priorities for Year 1

- Put elements in place that members can use right away
 - Rebuild the website and expand social networks
 - Build an online information clearinghouse including industry best practices and sources for diverse talent
 - Conduct research of our industry: what is our status; what are our targets for improvement?
 - Upgrade the Talent Development Innovator Award for 2011 to bring more focus to diversity accomplishments
- Deliver as much of these as possible through volunteers
- Secure funding for costlier components, especially internships, scholarships, and enhancements to the organization to provide for continuity of effort