

2015

teacher action group (TAG) inquiry to action groups (ItAGs) catalogue

TAG is excited to present this year's ItAG offerings! ItAGs bring together educators, parents, students, and concerned citizens to focus on topics related to social justice in education and to take action connected to what they learned. ItAGs create a space for us to explore, imagine, and work towards creating the schools our students deserve.

Listed below are descriptions of the **NINE** groups that will convene across the city in the coming months.

Register for the ItAG(s) you would like to join here: [ItAG Registration 2015](#)

Then join us at **6:30 on FEBRUARY 12 at SCIENCE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY** (55 N. 22nd Street) for a **PUBLIC LAUNCH** and a chance to meet the facilitators.

Join the movement for educational equity and justice in Philadelphia. Spread the word: [@TAGphilly](#); [#ItAGs2015](#); [#PHLed](#); [www.facebook.com/tagphilly](#).

For more information, visit [tagphilly.org](#) or reach out to us at tagphilly@gmail.com.

1) **TITLE:** **QUEER ISSUES IN EDUCATION**

Description: This facilitation will focus on the limits and possibilities of "queering" education. It is meant for educators who are both interested in applying queer theory in their teaching and brainstorming ways to both honor and disrupt students' conception of gender and sexual identity.

Guiding Questions: 1) How can we think critically about the differences between assimilation and inclusion?
2) How can queer theory influence our pedagogical approach in a quest to deconstruct and decategorize gender and sexuality norms with the hope of giving ALL children more room to breathe?

test score. High-stakes standardized tests are claiming ever-larger blocks of instructional time and hundreds of millions of dollars that would be better spent providing resources to our children's classrooms. Standardized testing has become a billion dollar industry, and the scores they mete out are used to close schools, lay off staff, and label students "failures." The narrative of failure is key to fueling the privatization of public schools. The single most effective weapon we have against toxic testing is to inform and empower parents to refuse to have their children take these standardized tests. This ItAG will examine the reasons behind the standardized testing boom, present case studies of recent test resistance, and develop concrete steps that can be taken to grow the Opt Out movement in Philadelphia.

Guiding Questions: 1) Why have high-stakes standardized testing and data-driven instruction taken center stage in our public schools?
2) How are parents, educators, and students pushing back against overuse and misuse of high-stakes tests nationally?
3) How can we build a truly diverse and powerful citywide opt-out movement in Philadelphia?

Facilitators: Alison McDowell is a Philadelphia public school parent and coordinator for Opt Out Philly, a committee of the Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools.
alison.mcdowell@gmail.com

Jenn Pour is a teacher at a Philadelphia elementary school.
jmpour@verizon.net

Max Rosen-Long teaches Spanish at a Philadelphia high school.
max.rosenlong@gmail.com

Time/Place: TBD

4) **TITLE:** **REVOLUTIONIZING EDUCATION WITH YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (YPAR)**

Description: In this ItAG, participants will explore the framework of Youth Participatory Action Research and determine actionable ways to implement this approach to teaching and learning within their classrooms. The overarching

framework for this group can be found in: Cammarota, J., & Fine, M. (Eds.). (2010). *Revolutionizing education: Youth participatory action research in motion*. NY:Routledge.

Guiding Questions: 1) How can we implement youth participatory action research as a means of everyday teaching and learning?
2) How can we develop a pipeline of meaningful inquiries for students and teachers to develop YPAR projects?
3) How can we uphold process of learning over products of learning in the classroom?

Facilitator: Chris Rogers is the lead of @JustMaybeCo, a new curriculum startup dedicated to progressive educational content, as well as a Media/Technology Specialist at a local independent school.

chris@justmaybe.co

Time/Place: TBD

5) **TITLE: SOCIAL JUSTICE UNIONISM:
HOW CAN WE MAKE IT HAPPEN?**

Description: The Social Justice Unionism ItAG is an opportunity for teachers to develop a greater understanding of what social justice unionism is and how it can be adopted and embraced in our workplaces, as organized teachers within the PFT, as largely unorganized charter school teachers, and as members of other unions in the Philadelphia region. It is our aim that this work will help inform existing organizing and inspire new initiatives

Discussions will focus on the following texts: (1) The Labor Notes book *How to Jump-Start Your Union: Lessons from the Chicago Teachers*, which describes the work done by CORE in Chicago to transform the CTU. (Copies of this book will be available at a discount to iTAG members.) (2) *Raising Expectations (and Raising Hell): My Decade Fighting for the Labor Movement*, by Jane McAlevey and Bob Ostertag, which gives an insider's detailed view of the work from an organizer's perspective. (3) Additional readings that describe successful organizing within locals to transform the culture of the union.

Guiding Questions: 1. What is social justice unionism?
2. How have unions in other sectors and other geographic

regions transformed themselves into social justice unions?

3. What lessons can we draw from the experiences of unions from other sectors and geographic regions around the country (and the world) in our effort to embrace social justice unionism in our workplaces here in Philadelphia?

Facilitators:

Kelley Collings is a teacher at Feltonville School of Arts & Sciences and has taught in the SDP for 14 years. Prior to teaching she was a community and parent organizer for over a decade in cities across the country. Kelley is a founding member and current Co-chair of the Caucus of Working Educators of the PFT.

kelleycollings@gmail.com

Shaw MacQueen is in his third year teaching in the School District of Philadelphia, currently at Bryant Promise Academy. He has been an active member of the Caucus of Working Educators since its creation, as well as a member of his school's PFT building committee.

nsmacqueen@gmail.com

Tamara Anderson is an advocate for children and teens, a professional artist, editor, and a prolific writer. She has vast experience as an educator with the University of Phoenix, Chicago Public School District, New York Board of Education and the School District of Philadelphia. Tamara has taught middle years through adults for over 14 years and continues to be a teacher consultant with Philadelphia Writers Project. She writes articles for Examiner.com about the struggles and successes of public and adult education in Philadelphia.

moact1973@gmail.com

Time/Place:

TBD

6)

TITLE:

REIMAGINING THE "PUBLIC" IN PUBLIC EDUCATION?

Description:

Across the globe, policies in public education have been dominated by the market-based forces of privatization and competition. As educators, we have been opposing these policies and we continue to claim that our students deserve high quality public education. Because of the pervasive nature of these forces, however, it has been extremely difficult for us to articulate our visions of what

schools should be and how they should serve the "public." This ItAG intends to provide a space to articulate such a "public" vision in Philadelphia and to rethink the role of the "public" in education in a time marked by privatization.

Guiding Questions: 1) Where is the "public" of public education in our schools today?
2) What is our vision for public schools in Philadelphia?
3) How can this vision help us to take a position on current educational issues and policies?

Facilitator: Encarna Rodriguez was born and raised in Spain and worked as a psychologist in early childhood programs in this country. She is now an Associate Professor and teaches undergraduate and graduate students at Saint Joseph's University.

erodrigu@sju.edu

Time/Place: TBD

7) **TITLE: HIP HOP:
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY**

Description: This ItAG will explore the history of Hip Hop in the United States and the positive and negative societal implications of Hip Hop today. The ItAG will model how the use of lyric and video analysis can increase critical thinking and media literacy. This ItAG is meant for any educators, community members, or interested parties who understand that this genre has become the language of the youth. If you are interested in engaging in study, and discussion of the impact of Hip Hop in our nation and using that information to connect with the students of Philadelphia then we look forward to seeing you.

Guiding Questions: 1) How can Hip Hop be included in class to promote the idea of social justice?
2) In what ways does this musical genre negatively impact the discussion around social justice?
3) How can the study of Hip Hop be used to promote literacy in the classroom?

Facilitators: Yaasiyn Muhammad is a Philadelphia native currently teaching Social Studies in the School District of Philadelphia. He has taught African American History,

U.S. History, and Government at Central High School over the last two years.

ymuhamm1@gmail.com

Ismael Jimenez is a sixth year social studies teacher in the School District of Philadelphia. He currently works at Kensington Capa teaching African American History.

ishx12@gmail.com

Monique McKenney is a veteran teacher working at Central High School currently teaching African American History.

msmckenneychs@gmail.com

Time/Place: Central High School: Room 326: Thursdays, 5-7 pm

8) **TITLE: TEACHING FERGUSON AND BEYOND**

Description: Classrooms have the potential to launch students and educators into learning and action-oriented projects that extend beyond the classroom. In this ItAG, we will learn from local educators, legal advocates, and each other about content, action-oriented projects, and organizations related to teaching your students about Ferguson, racial justice, and beyond.

Guiding Questions: 1) What kinds of teaching are educators doing in and out of school that relate to Ferguson and racial justice?
2) What does teaching Ferguson, African American history, and African American Studies look like across content areas?

Facilitators: Local educators, activists, and legal advocates will share facilitation of this ItAG
shira.cohen.88@gmail.com

Time/Place: TBD

9) **TITLE: FIGHTING RACISM FROM WITHIN:
INQUIRING INTO STRUCTURAL RACISM IN THE
CAUCUS OF WORKING EDUCATORS**

Description: In the wake of the recent state-sanctioned violence in Ferguson, Missouri, this ItAG takes seriously the idea that whiteness and racism deeply shape the way political

organizations work and are structured. In this ItAG, we will form an inquiry group to examine and address structural racism in the Caucus of Working Educators. In the first part of this inquiry group, we will read texts and think deeply about how legacies of racism might currently shape the work of the Caucus of Working Educators. Then, in the second part of the inquiry group, we will develop and implement an action with the goal of beginning to address structural racism in the Caucus. This ItAG involves approximately 16 hours of time, spread out between February to June, and will be conducted as research for Rhiannon Maton's PhD dissertation. Participants must consent to be part of the research study.

Guiding questions: 1) How does the Caucus of Working Educators currently understand and address issues of race and racism?
2) How can we (re)imagine the Caucus as an anti-racist organizing space?

Facilitator: Rhiannon Maton is a public high school teacher from Toronto and is currently a PhD candidate at University of Pennsylvania. Rhiannon is also a member of the Caucus of Working Educators and has been actively involved in helping build the organization and wage campaigns since April 2014.

rmaton@gse.upenn.edu

Time/Place: TBD

ItAG is excited to offer an opportunity for teachers to build community, engage as learners, and develop as activists.

Register for the ItAG(s) you would like to join here: [ItAG Registration 2015](#)