



Nikum Pon, PhD

Dr. Nikum Pon has dedicated the last 22 years of his life working with a wide range of students and their families in racially, linguistically, and culturally diverse communities in predominantly low-income settings in the greater Seattle area. He spent nine of those years at SafeFutures Youth Center, a grassroots community/youth development agency that serves predominantly low-income Southeast Asians and East African youth and families. As a staff member, he was directly responsible for four major programs - National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA), After-school Tutorial, Asset Team, and Bilingual Case Management services. As a result, 95% of youth who were gang-involved or at-risk of gang involvement graduated from high school and/or moved on to working full-time to support their families. As a board of directors' secretary and president, he oversaw SFYC's development in operations, policies and procedures, long-term strategic planning, annual evaluation of the executive director, board development and financial management. As a result, SFYC's budget doubled to 2 million dollars. Furthermore, Nikum has taught a number of undergraduate and graduate level courses at the University of Washington and Seattle Pacific University while conducting various mixed-method research on racial equity pertaining specifically to immigrant refugee students and families of color.

Currently, Nikum is the Director of Equity in Education for the Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD). In this position, he and his team support King and Pierce county school districts toward systems transformation to ensure academic excellence for each and every student, which upholds the PSESD's mission to ensure success for each child and eliminate the opportunity gap by leading with racial equity. He has developed and implemented research-based gap closing strategies along with providing on-going racial equity training and coaching for a wide-range of educators both locally and regionally to build their capacity to strengthen students' educational outcomes.

Nikum's academic preparation includes a Bachelor's Degree in Cell Molecular Biology and Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Psychology and Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Washington, and Master's Degree in Education from Seattle Pacific University. In addition, he recently completed his certification in Adaptive Leadership, a high impact collaborative leadership model, from Leadership Eastside as class of 2017. Nikum is a life-long learner as he continues to find ways to deepen his learning as a systems thinker/leader and critical race theorist.