



TRANSCRIPT

Creating Culturally Affirming Spaces: School and Classroom Practices

ERIN BROWDER

Hello, hello. Welcome, everyone. I think we can go ahead and get started. On behalf of REL West at WestEd, I'd like to welcome everyone and thank you for joining us this afternoon. Welcome to the first webinar of a two-part webinar series on creating culturally affirming spaces. My name is Erin Browder, and I work as a Senior Program Associate at WestEd, and I am happy to be here as a co-facilitator and content lead on this series. I'm joined by my REL West and WestEd colleagues, who you will meet shortly.

Today, we will focus on what culturally affirming spaces look like in schools and classrooms as well as what they aren't. And then, on October 27, in part two, we will continue this conversation to discuss district-level and system approaches to cultivating culturally affirming spaces. Today, we are joined by a robust panel of talented leaders, practitioners, and researchers from the field who at any given time are doing all of those three things at once. Their experiences, expertise, and insights will bring life to the information that we're going to share with you on the next few slides.

As we embark on this journey to define what culturally affirming spaces are, I really want to lay a foundation that our conversation today is situated within a larger conversation of culturally responsive and sustaining education. And what you hear today supplements and complements what we understand the ever-evolving field of culturally responsive and sustaining ed and educational equity, in particular, racial equity. Our focus is not to supplant or move focus away from CRSE. Rather, through the lens of culturally affirming spaces, we can envision the outcome or the setting of those shared spaces where culturally, linguistically, ethically, and racially diverse people are celebrated, seen, and valued.

And lastly, I invite you all to set an intention for your time here, whether it's learning, being in community with likeminded people; if it's connection, discovering something new, or just being curious. I invite you to take a deep breath and sit with that intention as we get started.

LORI VAN HOUTEN

And I'll add my hello to everybody, and welcome to you. Thank you so much for joining us today. I'm Lori Van Houten with REL West, and I get to handle some of the housekeeping details. If you're having problems with the Zoom platform, you can try the call-in number that was on your invitation. We won't have the chat function on the entire webinar, but when we do, please be sure that your setting is actually to everyone so that we can all benefit from your questions and comments.

Keep an eye out for emails from RELWest@WestEd.org. We'll be sending the slides and a survey link shortly after the webinar ends. Please do complete the survey for us. It'll really help us plan for future events, including the one in a couple weeks, and it's also useful for our funder, the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, or IES. You probably noticed that we're recording the webinar. The recording will take a while to archive, and that will be a few weeks out. We'll send you another email with the archive link and also include some of the resources that we'll be sharing in the chat today for you.

And now, a little bit about the Regional Educational Laboratory West, or REL West. We're the sponsor of today's webinar, and we're one of ten regional educational labs in the country. Our goal is to promote the use of data and research evidence to inform policy and practice. We work with educators and policymakers to support evidence-based, equitable education systems. And now, I will turn it over to Rawlin.

RAWLIN ROSARIO

Good morning and good afternoon from wherever you may be logging in from. My name is Rawlin Rosario, I'm a Program Associate at WestEd. Today, we'll really be focusing on three main objectives. Our first is to deepen our understanding of culturally affirming school and classroom cultures and climates and how they shape student learning and social and emotional well-being. Our second is to examine practices, policies, and conditions that hinder student belonging and inhibit the academic and social well-being of racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students. And lastly, we'll learn about promising practices and behaviors that foster culturally affirmative schooling experiences for students.

And we'll do this through three stages, essentially. First, we'll start off by talking about what are culturally affirming spaces and what they aren't. We'll talk a little bit about research, some data, some definitions and get participants to really engage and reflect. Then, we'll move to the main event, our panel discussion, making our schools and classrooms feel and be safe. We'll have some time to hear from our panelists, then we'll engage in a Q&A, and we'll close out.

LORI VAN HOUTEN

And to take us through this agenda, we have a really dynamic set of presenters, and as Erin described them, our panelists. First, our team. Sharing the research and background on culturally affirming spaces in this first half of the webinar are Erin Browder, David Lopez, and Rawlin Rosario, who are all part of the Talent Development and Diversity team here at WestEd. As members of this team, they work directly with SEAs, districts, and schools, providing professional learning, technical assistance, and resources to develop and retain an effective, culturally responsive, and racially and linguistically diverse educator workforce. They also provide technical assistance, evaluation services, and research that increase educators' and leaders' use of policies and practices that promote equitable learning outcomes for each student.

Those are our presenters, and now our panelists. We are so excited to have with us four remarkable panelists from across the country with deep experience and practical knowledge about creating culturally affirming spaces. On the panel today, we have Dr. Ayanna Cooper, Marco Cenabre, Brian Knowles, and Dr. Alexis Patterson Williams. They'll each get a chance to tell you more about their work when we move to the panel discussion. But I will share here that they are authors and consultants, researchers, curriculum developers, and curriculum

reformers. They are school and district leaders doing their work with a fierce attention to culturally affirming and equitable pedagogies and amplifying and affirming the cultural identities of historically marginalized students and teachers in our schools and classrooms. They bring classroom and leadership experience across the content areas and grade spans, and they share a passion and commitment to social justice, linguistic and racial equity, and creating culturally affirming spaces. We are so grateful they've signed on to our webinar today, and we can all look forward to hearing a lot more from them in the second half of the webinar.

RAWLIN ROSARIO

To get us started today, we want to hear from you. Who is on the webinar? Please take a minute to fill out the following poll. What is your role? How familiar are you with culturally affirming practices in schools and classrooms?

We have a very diverse group of people here in terms of role. We have community-based organization members, we have school-based educators, we have many researchers and technical assistance providers, we have a few folks from the state education agencies. But it seems that almost 40% of us are just learning about culturally affirming practices, and only 9% of us are beginning to see changes in outcomes in their own districts by implementing these types of practices. So we have a broad range of expertise and a broad range of roles here. It should be an exciting webinar for all of us to learn a little bit more about culturally affirming practices.

Before we really dive in and embark on our journey together, we wanted to offer some working agreements to guide our learnings and our interactions today and throughout this series of webinars. Our first working agreement is to keep confidentiality. What I mean by this is not to keep your learnings confidential, right? We'll be diving into very personal stories and experiences, so what we don't want to share are those personal experiences, right? Like, "Did you know that Rawling did this when he was a teacher?" or, "Did you hear what he said about his school district?" We want to stay away from those. What we should be sharing are any resources, any lessons that we've learned, or any reflections that we've had throughout our time together. Those are all fair game.

Our second working agreement is to focus on intent versus impact. When we engage in conversations around race, equity, culture, it is more important to focus on the impact of our words or actions rather than our intent. Now, I'm not a betting man, but if I was, I would bet that no educator in this virtual room wakes up with the intent to cause harm to their students. At the end of the day, we're here because we have a desire to learn more and advance the principles of culturally responsive and sustaining education to improve outcomes for our minoritized students and communities. Although we may not have the intention to do harm, sometimes that does not change our impact.

To shed light on this agreement, I like to use the example of driving. If someone runs a stop sign and they hit me, the first thing I don't want to hear is, "I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to hit you." Rather, "I need help. I need an ambulance to fix my leg." Although you didn't intend to hit me, you still caused harm that we need to address and really take care of. And so, as we go through this and our future webinars, please remember to think more about the impact of your words and actions, not the intent.

Our next working agreement is knowing when to step forward and step back. We want to be intentional about hearing multiple perspectives and monitoring our air time, both as presenters

and panelists. But we also want to encourage participants to write in the chat, ask questions, and really reflect on the material presented. We'll have opportunities throughout our webinar to type into the chat and to ask questions as we move along.

Our next working agreement is stay in the room and struggle together. Talking about culture, microaggressions, how practices and policies that we may be a part of inhibit academic and social well-being of students is not very easy to talk about and can sometimes be uncomfortable. But we're asking you to work through it. Stay in the room together. Recognize when you're feeling uncomfortable and lean into it. Gift yourself that opportunity to be all in and present.

Our next working agreement is interrogate self and systems. This work is very personal for everyone here for very different reasons. We know that the work we do here impacts students all over the country. But as much as it is about students, we're asking you to shift your gaze and really interrogate yourself and the systems at play that may contribute to how students experience inequity in school and in education.

And lastly here, our last working agreement is accept lack of closure. This is a big one. We do not claim to have all the answers to solve racism and educational inequity. If we did, the world might look differently. But at the end of the day, we are on a journey together. We're all starting from different places, and we're not going to figure out all the answers on one webinar. It may be that you leave here with more questions than you came in with, and that's OK. We're on a journey together to learn and to grow.

Before I pass it on to my colleague, Erin, I just want to emphasize to use these working agreements, utilize them, call them out, use the chat if you need to. But these will serve as kind of a grounding for us and foundation for us to have these conversations.

And I want to leave you all with this next quote as we start to dive into our material. "Public schools are the living rooms of our communities," by Dr. Miguel Cardona, the U.S. Secretary of Education. Please let this quote ground us in our work today. And with that, I'll pass it over to my colleague, Erin.

ERIN BROWDER

Awesome, thank you, Rawlin. I just plugged in the chat that we do have some panelists that are on Twitter, so feel free to tweet at them. Also, plugging REL West, you can tweet @REL West. Rawlin, if you don't mind typing those into the chat. You can also tweet @WestEd as well. So we look forward to continuing the conversation on the interweb, and we invite you to reach out to our panelists. And other panelists, feel free to drop your handles in the chat so folks can retweet and get your good work and words out there. Awesome. Thank you, Rawlin.

All right. So you all have heard a lot from us, and it's time for us to hear from you. Because while you may not know the official, if there is one, definition of culturally affirming spaces, you do bring your experience, your expertise as students who went through schooling as well as educators or practitioners, and we want to hear how you experience culture in classrooms and in schools. Seeing different languages around the campus. Book selections, definitely, libraries. The ways students dress. The way people dress. Language, curriculum. I love this, keep coming. Celebrations. Hair. Tribal schools in Montana have incorporated smudging. The different cultural practices. The ways kids congregate. The ways they have conversations with each other. The foods people eat. I taught in East Harlem, we had patties in the cafeteria.

There's culture all around us. Art, clubs, interaction. Awesome. Different dolls. Representations of our kids, definitely. Behaviors, flags, beliefs, certainly.

Let's switch it up and think about, in what ways do we hear culture? And I know we talked about conversation and language, but what are other ways that we hear culture in schools? Music, definitely. Oral stories, absolutely. Folk tales, video clips. What are kids watching on their phones? Who speaks in the class, absolutely. Tone. Voice and volume, I'm familiar with that. Code switching, definitely. The way our students talk to each other during recess when they're outside of the academic setting. How are they speaking to each other, how they're greeting each other in the hallways. Multilingual. We hear multiple languages. Laughing, for sure. We hear prior knowledge, we hear their knowledge that they bring in from home, from their neighborhoods. Colloquialisms. These are great, thank you, everyone. We hear stories. Absolutely.

And so, the next question is, in what ways do we feel culture? We're building ourselves up because all of this is almost like a snowball, that these things build on top of each other. We've got friendships, relationships. We're connected at the heart. Idioms. Acknowledgment of all voices. You feel included, you feel like you belong. Sharing cultures. Family engagement. Support. Positive affirmations. You feel seen. You feel trust, empowerment, definitely. People feel safe. That's a big one. Unfortunately, that's not a reality for many students in schools. Collaboration, high-fiving, hugging, absolutely. Signs of care, signs of nurturing. Students feel happy. Seeking to understand. We see smiles. Fresh air. We see facial expressions, the nonverbal ways that we communicate, like, "I get you." Celebrating holidays. Compassion, empathy. Low anxiety. The lower effective filters, when our kids feel seen and valued and that they belong. Representation. Our faculty. Thank you, Raven.

So we're actually hearing a lot of those culturally affirming conversations as they speak to educator workforce, educator diversity. I know we're centering on students and families, but this is for all adults. When we think about the low retention of teachers of color coming in and leaving, this is pertinent for everyone on a school campus. Students are more academically successful. Awesome. I had a hunch that you all were going to nail these questions because the truth is, we're surrounded by culture. Here, I've already listed a lot of different ways that we see, feel, and hear culture, a lot you all have already put inside of the chat box. We're speaking the same language, we have a shared understanding of what culture looks like, feels like, and sounds like in schools. Thank you.

So as we move towards defining what culture is, we have to somewhat reset our understandings, our experiences of culture because in our everyday autopilot mode, we may narrow down what culture looks like, and we might lose the texture and the brilliance of all the different ways we're impacted by culture that we just named two slides ago.

I have this definition here from the National Center for Cultural Competence. I invite you all to take a minute to read this definition to yourself while I read it aloud. Culture: an integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, roles, relationships, and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group.

All of the sharing of the different types of culture that we discussed two slides ago, we see here in this definition. Next to the definition, I want to acknowledge this visual. It comes from the culturally and linguistically responsive framework by the New Mexico Department of Ed.

And this isn't an exhaustive list, these rings of culture. But it maps out all the different cultural identities that we hold individually and collectively. You have gender culture, religious culture, socioeconomic culture. These are some of the things we saw in the chat as well. Disability, nationality, orientation, and age. In the middle, in the center we see ethnic, ethnicity or race. And there's a reason why that ring is in the middle and that it's also the biggest ring. Because we know in our society that through racialization, through our experiences of both how we're perceived in the world and actually the ways that people interact with us are largely informed by our race. And so, we see that that larger circle shapes and frames how we experience all the other rings.

Thinking about the information that we discussed in the chat and the vastness of culture and how it permeates every space and engagement, we're prompted to think about how when we don't see culture, we may miss the ways that we could either validate or invalidate our students' cultural identities, the ways that we might silently reinforce a dominant culture norm that sends a harmful message of exclusion or invalidation to students. So we're going to talk a little bit more about that as we move on, and I want us to keep in mind that race is not equal to culture, even though they have an interdependent relationship; that they mutually reinforce each other, they inform each other, but that all people have cultures just like all people have race. And when we miss those little practices and behaviors and opportunities and interactions and engagements with our students, we might be sending a message of exclusion to them.

DAVID LOPEZ

As we think about all that we've already offered around culture—and I really appreciate the responses because we moved beyond that surface-level culture to really think about it in deep ways. And even in the chat, somebody brought up, who are our teachers? And I want us to hold some of the pieces that are really important to us as we think about why we need to continue to create culturally affirming spaces. And so, in this country, we know that 50% of our students identify as being students of color compared to only 20% of their teachers. And we know often the causes of the disparate conditions and outcomes are caused by the cultural dissonance between our teachers and our students, the ways that we don't understand each other, the ways we misinterpret tone and facial expressions.

And then, we also know that both implicit and explicit bias in our classrooms and schools really compromise, really harm the quality of learning environments, the conditions, and contribute to those systemic inequities and negative schooling experiences of students of color. The ways that we think and feel about students and make meaning of it often are the ways in which we harm our children. Again, thinking back to Rawlin, not talking about your intent, but what is the impact of the actions. And we know one way to disrupt some of this is listening to the stories and lived experience of students. I would add beyond listening, believing the stories and lived experiences of students and families from historically marginalized backgrounds so that we can continue or start to...I mean, even on this webinar, we know 80% of us have none or some that are really moving to cultural response, to move to creating caring classroom communities that affirm the educational environment. We want you to recognize us as experts of our own reality. And back to what I've said, I've had a lot of teachers ask me, "Well, the student told me I'm being racist. That's not true, they're weaponizing." How about we start by believing the student? And I want us to think about our call to action as really around culturally affirming spaces, but also really moving to that larger piece. Erin was explicit that this is not to move us away from the larger body of research around culturally responsive and sustaining education.

And so, what CRSE offers us is places where we create welcoming and affirming environments. How do we hold high expectation and have rigorous instructions for our students of color, especially if we don't believe that they are deserving enough, or smart enough, or behave well enough? How do we have inclusive curriculum and assessment? How do we ensure that our teachers and educators are getting the appropriate professional learning opportunities that really teach us about who we are and how it impacts our students?

I think the power of CRSE is that it really does a couple of things. Holistically, I think it speaks to sustain and foster linguistic and cultural pluralism in our schools. It's used as a way to not just respond, not roll with our culture but to sustain our culture of students and communities of color in our schools rather than suppress and remove them. Stop telling us we need to behave this way to be successful. We don't. That we view culture as additive rather than subtractive. And that we disrupt anti-Blackness and anti-Brownness that's rooted in our dominant culture of schooling. That we look not only to transform schools but society as a whole.

And I want us to hold this because to do all that work, we have to contend with this quote. "Schools become a meeting place for cultures, containing children and adults who bring with them multiple facets of their identity along with unique experiences and perspectives." If we know that the schools become these sites for culture, how do we sustain those, how do we affirm those, how do we keep safe places and understand that we come with brilliance into your school community? Stop talking about learning loss and start talking about our brilliance.

ERIN BROWDER

David, can I add one thing to what you shared as well? Thinking about how folks self-examine, that there's an invitation in this quote as well that we self-examine. If we think back to the rings of culture, what are your rings? How would you fill that diagram out? How are you aware of the culture that you're bringing? Some of the work that David and I do around social identities, we talk about how sometimes the identities that are most hidden and invisible to us as individuals are the ones that hold unearned power and privilege. And so, as we think about this meeting place, and we start to turn our attention towards the assets that our racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students are bringing in and their families, we also have to self-examine and see the ones that we're carrying and maybe what needs to be mediated, what needs to be addressed, and how we're showing up and engaging with the people that we're here to serve.

And with that, we have a definition we would like to offer the group. Again, this is a newer body of work. In the last five years, we're hearing more conversations around culturally affirming practices and spaces. So the definition that you see here is informed by key pieces of work. The authors are listed below on the side. I'm going to invite you to read it to yourself as I read it aloud for the benefit of the group.

Culturally affirming spaces—schools and classrooms where adult practices, behaviors, and policies thoroughly acknowledge and proactively seek to affirm students' cultural identities and multifaceted cultural assets as integral to students' positive self-concept, academic and social well-being, and while working to reduce harm and microaggressions experienced by students and families of color.

And in fact, as I read that, I can also think about our staff of color. Someone inserted that into the chat. We need to remember, all of these aren't compartmentalized, this is a collective

shared space. And so, when we experience a microaggression towards a student, as an educator of color, I'm experiencing that vicariously. It can be a secondary traumatic experience.

Holding this definition here, we would love to get your feedback. How does this resonate for you? What terms stand out to you? What phrases stand out to you? We'd love to get some interaction with you all in the ways that we are asked to treat students from our own community. One thing that we'll talk more specifically about in our second webinar on the policies, practices, and procedures of systems, and schools, and districts, we do want to hold the fact that this harm is not just in individual interactions, that it might be materialized in policies that have unfair or inequitable burden placed on certain groups of students versus others.

Positive self-concept. Social well-being. Do policies equal curriculum? I would definitely say curriculum could be a part of a policy. But I appreciate that. And we invite questions as well. This is a beginning body of work. And so, you all are practitioners, you're in the field, we definitely want to make sure that we're hearing from you all and being responsive. That's the core of culturally responsive approaches. Proactively working to reduce harm, absolutely. This definition somewhat captures our first note in the agenda of defining culturally affirming spaces, what they are and what they

aren't. Because as much as we're looking to validate and lift up the assets of our students, we also need to be mindful of how we contribute and perpetuate harm in microaggressions.

Facilitating conversations about race and culture, defining microaggressions. We're going to offer some language around that shortly. Some of our teachers are afraid of these conversations. Definitely. And the working agreements that Rawlin shared earlier on could be one way of creating a container to engage in critical conversations. Policies is a broad term, interpreted very differently, definitely. People to understand their biases. And we know how much our cultural identities can shape and inform our bias. Thank you all for sharing these reactions, reflections, and what resonates with you about this definition, and clarifying questions as well.

A lot of this work is really getting to know the cultures inside of your buildings. Getting to know the people that you're serving, the adults around you because it's not one-size-fits-all. And so, it's very much a fluid process of being present, again being mindful of yourself, engaging in that critical consciousness work and self-examining, and centering the students and the cultures that are in front of them. As David also touched on, all too often, cultural behaviors and practices are seen as good or bad, and that those associated with other groups of folks that aren't white, that aren't part of the dominant culture, are negative.

In the words of Sonia Nieto, "In many US classrooms, cultural, linguistic, and other differences are commonly viewed as temporary. If they're troublesome, they're barriers to learning. Consequently, students of diverse backgrounds are treated as walking sets of deficiencies, as if they had nothing to bring to the educational enterprise." That's a really big idea, and we all have to sit with that because how often is it that we hear students using language that we invalidate, that we don't see them speaking multiple languages as an asset? Or the different behaviors, if they're playing with their hair, the different ways that they're engaging with each other, that we might be engaging in microaggressions with them.

I appreciate all these comments. Just want to turn my face to the chat for a second. I think we have to teach kids how to articulate their thoughts down to TK students. Social well-being lives there. Absolutely. And that we have to also help our educators. Thinking about our work being that we support students and communities, that we address the challenges and systems, and support adult practices that are aligned with the outcomes that we're hoping to achieve. Students need to be their best advocate, and adults need to be willing to listen. Even that as an example, when one child advocates and another does, but one is called defiant and then the other is seen as articulate and able to communicate their needs, there's some work for the adult bias in that space. Awesome, thank you.

As we're going through the definition and starting to put together in our minds what a culturally affirming space looks like and feels like and sounds like, we have some ideas here to share with you. On the left column, you see values and knowledge, and on the other, you see instruction, curriculum, and engagement. In these spaces, we see color consciousness. So we don't have the challenge or the barrier of a colorblind approach, "I see no color." That we name race and its importance, and again our students' worldview and sense of self. We learn what the community desires and wants to sustain through schooling. There's a commitment to sustaining community languages and ways of being while providing access to the dominant culture. And on the right side, we're validating our students' lived experiences, as David mentioned, and we're believing them, we're hearing them. Before we negate, we ask more questions, there's a culture and spirit of inquiry. We're active and socially engaging, connecting to the histories. We teach criticality, reading and writing to understand truth and power, that comes from Dr. Gholdy Muhammad. We enact mutual respect with accountability between students and adults.

In these spaces, we see a different relationship where there's the collective responsibility, so rather than power over, it's power with, that we're all a part of this larger community. And so, there's a commitment to making sure that we're being responsive to the social and academic well-being of students and teachers, and then between students. Because right now, we're talking about adults to students, but students are watching. They know the student that constantly is reprimanded for their cultural behaviors or cultural language. That might even incur that they start to adopt that kind of stratification internally as groups of students, that that student might feel even more shunned because of the behaviors that they're seeing modeled by the adults around them.

Some examples. We talked about these larger concepts, but what are the examples? And as David also mentioned with the culturally responsive and sustaining ed, the practices that we adopt as culturally responsive and sustaining educators are what is going to get us a culturally affirming space. Again, these conversations are not separate.

Here are some examples, and these come from *Teaching as a Cultural Practice*, a book by Dr. Maria del Carmen Salazar and Dr. Lerner. And we will definitely plug a link for that. I highly recommend it. But here, we have setting discussion norms with students and facilitating student conversations that foster critical consciousness. Questioning systems, questioning why things are the way they are, analyzing multiple perspectives, advocating for social change. Incorporating students' home languages, their heritage language, their vernaculars, code switching into instruction and include materials in students' home languages. Ultimately expressing value, respect, and having an asset perspective of students' languages, cultures, and communities. And all of these are action-oriented. It's not a one-and-done. It's through

practice, it's through discipline that we really build our muscle and ensure culturally affirming spaces for our kids, and we reduce that harm, and we address it as needed.

David's going to walk us through some information around microaggressions because we have to, again, hold both of these, the vision and what we want, and then also what we need to work to reduce and what we don't want.

DAVID LOPEZ

Appreciate you, Erin. And I've seen a lot in the chat around where do we start. I want us to hold Dr. Tatum's quote. She says, "It's important to understand the system of advantage is perpetuated when we do not acknowledge its existence." And I often think about how we start there, how we don't take what Paul Gorski calls a racial equity detour. And really one of his principles is heading straight on. We have to start with acknowledging that it's real. And as we said earlier, that starts with believing us when we tell you something's happening to us. We've been saying this for too long for us to act surprised.

So I want to talk a little bit about the ways that shows up in the classroom. There are a couple of things I want us to dive into with microaggressions, but overall, one way I've heard it put is, microaggressions are these constant small cuts that we receive daily that really amount to a lot of harm day in and day out. And I'm at a point in my life where the microaggressions no longer feel micro, they feel really macro because there's so much. I don't know if that's because I'm getting a little bit older or what. But it's like, "Enough." And there are a few things that I want us to hold. There are different forms of microaggressions. The first one that we want you to think about, and start with the self and think of the ways we might be perpetuating these, are verbal microaggressions. Those are comments or questions that are hurtful or stigmatizing to a certain marginalized group of people. Things like, "You're so smart for a girl." We think, "'You're so smart' is a compliment. What do you mean for a girl? What are you saying underneath that? What are you saying about the intelligence of women?"

There are behavioral forms of microaggression, and this is really around the ways in which people behave that are hurtful or discriminatory to certain groups of people. I've been into many classrooms. In fact, when I was visiting classrooms for my daughter when I was thinking about kindergarten, the one thing I always looked for in the classroom was who was raising their hand, and who was the teacher calling on. One behavioral microaggression I saw in countless schools, both as a professional and as a parent, was teachers ignoring the Black students raising their hands and calling on their white students.

There are different types of microaggressions. The first type that I want us to hold is a microassault. And this is, I think, what we mostly think about, and that's around being intentional. When we think about things that are harmful, when we start naming racism, we often kind of start here. What's the intentional thing? "I didn't do anything intentional." That's often why we focus on intent, to sort of disprove that we didn't do something that perpetuates racism. So a microassault is an intentional behavior in a discriminatory way while not intending to offend. So you might make a racist joke and say, "I'm just joking." It's not funny. I know I laughed after that, but that's an uncomfortable laugh. It's not funny. Racist jokes are not funny.

I'm going to move to the third one, the microinsults. And the microinsults are a comment or action that's unintentionally discriminatory. For example, a person saying to an Indian graduate student, "Your people must be so proud." Again, when we're successful, our

communities, families might be proud of us, but what are the underlying assumptions here? “Your people must be so proud.” What are the stereotypes that we’re leaning on around Indian people?

Another that I want to hold that I think is so present is microinvalidations. And I’m going to head back to the theme of, “Just believe us when we tell you.” When we say we’re experiencing racism or offense, we hear things like, “Are you sure it was about racism? How do you know that that was racist? You sure that person isn’t just a jerk?” Or the ways in which we deny our teachers and educators of color when we bring up systemic racism. “Racism does not exist in our schools.” Right? The ways we continue to microaggress. And again, I want us to hold Erin’s point in this conversation that while we’re focusing on schools and students in particular, we do it to our colleagues of color as well at all levels.

ERIN BROWDER

Thank you, David. We wanted to make sure that we put a pin in this conversation of microaggressions, really showing you what it looks like for students who experience microaggressions either on a daily or regular basis. And a lot of this work is informed by a growing body of work around racial trauma because we see that accumulated microaggressions and race-based stress can really have curbing or detrimental impacts for our students and other folks of color.

There are three columns or buckets that you see here. One is internal devaluation, another is assaulted sense of self, and the other is internalized voicelessness. And I invite you, as I read through these terms and concepts, to think about...and it’s likely that you’ll think about an experience that you might have or how we see these behaviors in the students that we serve and the families that we serve.

Feelings of unworthiness or undeserving, feeling unaccomplished or that they have little to no talent or skills, having low self-esteem and confidence, having an unhealthy worldview. I know for myself, when I would work in high schools and middle schools, you’d hear frequently, “Miss, I only live for today. I can’t think about a year from now.” What is that saying about all of the ideas and notions that might be poured into this child or what they’re consuming or absorbing from the world around them that they can’t envision themselves a year from now?

Inability or struggle towards goal-setting, narrowing sense of time, increased arousal, and mistrusting. And these are not prescriptive; these are all examples and indicators. We might see that one day they might change, in terms of they might be fluctuating behaviors that are associated with these.

Internalized voicelessness, not speaking up for themselves, limited demonstration of agency. Appeasement or fawning, we call that people pleasing. Limited emotional expressions. We have to know what this looks like so that we can also be aware. With awareness comes openness. And we can start to, again, looping back to that self-examining “In what ways am I contributing to that? How am I addressing that? How am I supporting my students there?”

We’re not closing out this first part quite yet, but we wanted to make sure we offered words from the field because we’re experts, we’re practitioners, but we’re part of a larger community of folks that have been doing this work for decades. And so, it’s really important that we lift them up because we are standing on the shoulders of giants. Here, we have this quote: “Culturally responsive teachers build bridges between students’ cultural assets and

instruction in ways that affirms the identities and cultural backgrounds of their students and minimizes the occurrence of harm and microaggressions.” Again, that theme is coming back up for us.

As we move into a final reflection of part one, I invite you to hold the two ideas of, we want to work towards, we want to be proactive in our affirming, and then we also want to be mindful in the reduction of behaviors that are associated with causing harm and microaggressions for our students of color.

LORI VAN HOUTEN

So that was a lot of information to take in in a fairly short amount of time. And as we transition to our panel discussion, why don't we just take a minute or so to reflect on what you've heard about culturally affirming spaces, the definition, what they are, what they aren't. Take a few notes if you want. But let's just think about what you've learned and what you still need or want to learn, and in particular, what you might look for in the panel discussion. Just take 20 seconds or so and think about that, and then we'll move right into the panel discussion.

OK. Take a deep breath. We're moving into the panel discussion on making schools and classrooms feel and be safe by creating culturally affirming spaces. As I mentioned earlier, our panelists include Dr. Ayanna Cooper, Marco Cenabre, Brian Knowles, Dr. Alexis Patterson Williams. We'll be posting some links in the chat to their work and other important resources. And we'll reopen the chat. It should be open and available to you. My apologies for the earlier chat post. You can post your questions in the chat. If we have time at the end, we'll get to as many of those as we can. Erin and David will serve as our facilitators for the panelists. And with that, I'll say a huge thanks to the panelists. We're really just so grateful that you're here to share your knowledge and experience. And we're going to start with personal introductions. Each panelist will have a few minutes to introduce themselves, and as they do that, they're going to answer our first question, which is, why is this work important to you?

And with that, I will turn it over to Dr. Cooper to introduce herself.

DR. AYANNA COOPER

Thank you so much. I'm Ayanna Cooper. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening from wherever you're logging on from. I am an educator, author, researcher, and civil rights activist for students in the K-12 setting who are learning English as a new language in school. And so, I'm just so honored to have been invited to be on this esteemed panel and share a little bit about the work that I do. And that first question... This has just been such a great conversation. Why is this work important to me? Well, number one, I approach the work from a civil rights perspective. When I was 5 years old, I had the pleasure of playing Rosa Parks in a school play, and that's never left me. So I knew early on how important the civil rights were and justice for all people.

And so, when I'm working alongside school leaders and leadership teams, and we're supporting their students who are English learners or multilingual, I'm really looking at what their experiences are like, and also the experiences of the teachers who serve them and the school leaders who are leading those schools. A lot of what we've already talked about so far begins to surface, if you will. We're not inclusive and equitable just because we might have a welcome sign in multiple languages. We like the welcome sign, but it's more evident in our

practices and lived experiences of the students that we serve. And so, I hope to talk a little bit about that later on. So thank you.

MARCO CENABRE

Hey, all. My name is Marco Cenabre. I teach high school English at New Haven Academy. And why is this work important to me? There are many reasons. That's quite the question. First, it's personal. I was born and raised in the community in which I currently teach, and I'm a product of the district in which I teach. I'm a product of a science class in middle school with 11 long-term substitutes, while simultaneously, I'm also a product of a teacher who taught me civil rights and justice in first grade. Both these experiences impact me and have influenced me in ways that, even as an adult, I'm still reflecting and coming to grips with. To be real cheesy, I do believe in the power of education and wielding it in order to make a more just, fair, and therefore intelligent [0:56:34].

The work is important because I do believe change is more attainable than ever. A really tangible and small example, for the first time on a calendar as a district, we celebrated Indigenous Peoples Day in contrast to Columbus Day. I grew up my whole life working on Columbus Day, and I finally took a day off for Indigenous Peoples Day to reflect and whatnot. So there are ways in which I believe change is more attainable than ever. And finally, I believe in consciousness, critical reflection, justice, and civil rights, especially for the Black and Brown communities, is an investment for us all. We all benefit from liberation. So I believe this work is crucial.

ERIN BROWDER

Thank you, Marco. Brian?

BRIAN KNOWLES

All right, peace and love, everybody. My name is Brian Knowles. And I arguably have the longest title of all time when it comes to a job title. I'm Manager of the School District of Palm Beach County's African, African-American, Latino, Holocaust, and Gender Studies. Again, just like Brother Marco mentioned, this work is personal. That's where it all began, and that was my impetus of entering education. Going through my K-12 experience, I hated school. I did not like school. It was a place where it wasn't culturally affirming, now that I've learned what culturally affirming is. I didn't see myself in the curriculum, I didn't see where my culture, my vernacular, the way I spoke, the way I dressed, the way I wanted to wear my hair was even welcome. It was a space where you were going to fix me as a Black child through assimilation and conformity. Therefore, it's personal.

In addition, as a Black man, when I walk away from this work, I don't have the privilege to walk into an enclave where I'm no longer Black and have all the adversity that is associated with that. So it's my survival. In addition to my survival, I have a daughter within this current educational system, and I may have grandchildren in this educational system. Therefore, I want to create sustainable change not only for my survival, but as I survive infinitely and internally, through all of my seeds. So that's why I'm here, and I would like to expound on that more. Thank you all for allowing me to share space with such dope individuals. Thank you.

ERIN BROWDER

Thank you, Brian. And last but certainly not least, Dr. Alexis Patterson Williams.

DR. ALEXIS PATTERSON WILLIAMS

Hello, everyone. My name is Alexis Patterson Williams, and I am an Associate Professor of Science Education at UC Davis, but I'm also a former classroom teacher in Oakland Unified School District. I worked an after-school program and supported intervention instruction for elementary students as well. And this work, as Marco and Brian have said, is deeply personal. And that, I think, is deeply troubling that, for both Brian and Marco as well as myself, that we came to understand the injustice of the school system as children. And I think that, for me, is why this work is so important. Because schools are both sides of oppression as well as opportunity. And it's mind boggling to me how schools coexist as both spaces; that for different students, they experience schools as these different things. And sometimes, the same student can experience them as both as they go from classroom to classroom. And it just ought not be the case that many of our folks in the chat said that students ought to advocate for themselves. It must be, but it ought not be the case. And I think that's why the work is so important, because schools are compulsory, which means our babies have to go to places that cause them harm, whether it's intentional or not. They have to sit in places where harm is happening to them. And so, the work is deeply important to me because I don't believe that teachers wake up in the morning thinking about how they can create harm for children. Nevertheless, it's happening. So for me, the work is, how do we support teachers in understanding what is happening in the classroom, whether it be theirs or the one next door, and how do we create just and transformative learning experiences for the babies that have to be in our classrooms? Thank you, and I look forward to the conversation.

ERIN BROWDER

And so, we're going to ask that our panelists go in order, share their responses, and then we invite you all to build on the responses from other folks as well as pull out pieces that you might have observed in the first part of our discussion. In your line of work, please share an example of what culturally affirming practices look like in classrooms and/or schools. And we want you to spend some time sharing more about what is the impact of these practices on students. What have you seen happen for our students?

DR. AYANNA COOPER

OK. I was kind of thinking of this analogy of how geese fly together and figure out who's going to go first and the rest...they just support each other. Guess I'm at the head right now. In the work I do, working with students who are identified as English learners, they're approximately 10% of the US K-12 population. That's about five million students. So our classrooms are becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse. It's kind of setting the stage. When you're thinking about those affirming practice, you first have to start with who's in your school community? Who are the students? What are the languages represented? And I just want to call out the top six right now. If anyone's on the call, and you speak these languages or these are your mother tongue, please let us know in the chat. I like to acknowledge linguistic diversity.

Spanish is the top language, followed by Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese, Somali, and number six is Haitian Creole. And I, myself, am quad-lingual. I speak four languages. I speak northern because I'm from Boston; I speak southern because I've lived in Atlanta for over 20 years; I speak English; and I am fluent in Ebonics and can code switch at will. I just wanted to call out my languages there.

Really thinking about how communities are, number one, acknowledging that school in and of itself is its own culture. If you're familiar with Hall's definition of culture—it came out in the 70s, we have surface culture and deep culture, and he uses this iceberg image. And so, I've been really doing some work around this iceberg, what we see in schools. There's surface school culture, but there's so much deep culture. And I don't hear us talking a lot about that. We're saying, "Students have a culture, teachers have a culture, that's it." I'm saying, "No, no, no. School in and of itself has its own culture, and we first have to acknowledge that."

Also, I heard earlier on the call the idea of students experiencing school differently depending upon who their teachers are and how they view them. And so, that saddens me, too. You could have a completely different experience if you have supporters and educators that are forming who you are, your language, your identity, versus those who are not. For me, thinking about linguistic equity, it would be regardless of the program models offered in schools, your language, your race, your ethnicity are welcomed, validated, and included. Because there's a lot of work now around DEI—diversity, equity, inclusion—now, it's the catchphrase. I'll give us diversity. We're diverse because I'm a Virgo, and you're a Sagittarius. I'll give us diversity because I'm a pescatarian, and you're a vegetarian. I'll give us that. But we are not equitable. And we are definitely not inclusive. So we have a lot more work to do there.

There was a direct message to me about the welcome sign in multiple languages. Thank you so much for that. I thought it was worth sharing. Yes to welcome signs in multiple languages. We need more of those. However, I would want to know more about how that welcome sign is actually lived through the experiences in that learning community. So I hope that that helps to start the conversation. And I'm going to go ahead and move out of the front.

ERIN BROWDER

Dr. Cooper, do you want to pass the mic?

DR. AYANNA COOPER

Oh, I love it! Yes, I am going to pass the mic. That's a shameless plug. I'm also serving as the Series Editor for *Language Magazine*, and it is called Pass the Mic. And in that series, we elevate articles that focus on Black and Brown children, their experiences, their educators, their language. So thank you for that shameless plug.

ERIN BROWDER

Brian, if we can hear from you. And Lori also added the prompts to the chat, both for the panelists but also for our audience so that you can remind yourself what our panelists are responding to.

BRIAN KNOWLES

In my line of work, what does a culturally affirming practice look like in a classroom? I'm going to kind of start off with a story here. One of the things that I do in my current role is I try to stay close to the ground. Even as I develop a curriculum...one of the first things I do is I develop a curriculum and I go in and teach that curriculum. I'm going into the classroom and make sure it's engaging because I find the most valuable set of data that we have is our student feedback. Because in education, we're too accustomed to looking at the quantitative data, looking at test scores, assessments, and what I call a measurement of intelligence that are created by oppressors first of all. So we're looking at our student feedback and understanding that.

Going into a classroom, one of the teachers had a classroom full of Black students and brought in some Black history fact—the first Black man who had a playbill at The Met in New York. And the only response that she got from that group of students was, one of the students said, “What are you talking about?” Everybody sat in silence, everybody was disengaged. Because we have gotten to a point when it comes to cultural relevance, cultural responsiveness, where they almost mean nothing because we overuse it so much. Equity, diversity, multiculturalism, inclusion, all those things. Like Ayanna said, they’re all just key terms we automatically go to at some point.

The reason I said that is, we kind of approach culturally affirming practices and culturally relevant practices, I’m going to say, within my district, because you said something really interesting, Dr. Cooper. Individual school sites have culture, and whole school districts have a culture. And I have a culture within my district where we have blanket approaches to cultural responsiveness when it comes to our instructional approach and how we address things. Without recognizing...when you take a particular group of students... We have a group of Black students, and we think this is the one approach that’s going to work for all Black students without recognizing the diversity that comes within Blackness or understanding that across the African Diaspora, we got our brothers and sisters from the Caribbean, we have some who are Latinx, even right here in our country. From a Black man from South Florida, I’m going to be almost very different culturally from somebody from California or Boston. The way I speak, the music I listen to, even some of the foods that I eat are going to be different. So the approach is not a blanket, but we have a habit of doing that sometimes.

So I think what an example of a culturally affirming practice is, one of the things that I did following a teacher is I made sure I engaged the students by centering their voice. I think the most effective culturally affirming practice is developing relationships with your students, getting to know your students, and understanding what their interests and experiences are, and centering them within the classroom before you set up expectations and procedures. Before I start lesson planning for what I believe is culturally relevant content, I want to incorporate the interests of those students, I want to incorporate the experiences of those students, and I also want to get to know those students and understand and identify their individual strengths, talents, and gifts that each one of them has, and design my instruction, and design the processes and procedures around that as opposed to creating this one kind of homogenous approach to approaching culture within a classroom.

Once again, we have a habit of looking at data and looking at all this research and what Dr. Such-and-Such said. And those are all dope. It’s incredible. But the most important piece is to have data, research, or anything you’re going to have, is just having those conversations and building authentic relationships with those kids, understanding their communities, and getting to know their families within the whole process. I’m going to pass the mic on to my sister, Alexis.

DR. ALEXIS PATTERSON WILLIAMS

You know what? I was sitting here thinking, “He said everything I wanted to say.” But I’ll put my flavor on it. Thinking about this question about what does it look like to create a culturally affirming classroom, I do think we have a tendency to want to pull out the lessons that incorporate critical perspectives, that have social justice orientations, and I think those are important. And I think it is also important to move beyond the superficial integration of putting Snoop Dogg’s name as the CD that the person purchases in the math problem to deeper

culturally relevant content focus or foci in our curriculum. I think that's super important, and I think oftentimes, when we think about culturally affirming and culturally sustaining, for me, as someone who's in teacher education and curriculum development, my mind often goes to, "Let's create a lesson, let's create a unit," and yes, let's do that. I'm not saying let's not do that because I do think that that's uber important to integrate culturally affirming approaches into our lessons and our curriculum content. However, if we don't know who our students are, how do we know what is going to be culturally affirming for them? We can't look and see Black and Brown faces, or particular racial and ethnic demographics, and then think we know our students. Our students are nuanced and diverse regionally, neighborhood by neighborhood. What matters to them is going to be different. Also, we need to check in with families and communities because they have goals for their students that go beyond ours or the district- and state-identified standards. How do we weave all of that in there? How do we know our students in these deep, robust, and rich ways?

I think there's a macro and a micro approach. The macro is like the content. But there's also a relational way of approaching it. I also think we have to consider our students developmentally and how do we center where they are, and what their needs are, and make that a part of the fabric of our classroom. My coauthor and sister scholar is Dr. Salina Graham, a veteran classroom teacher in Southern California, and one of the things that I love that she does in a middle school science classroom is, every Monday, she has a topic that she centers. And she picks a song where that theme is highlighted, she does instruction around it. So she might do instruction around depression; she might do instruction around issues of centering students who have an LGBTQIA identity—What does it mean to come out and to have this identity? She may pick up topics around sexism and gender discrimination. So she picks these topics. Every Monday, she's got a different topic. And for years, parents would say, "What does that have to do with science?" But without creating trust, without our students being seen and known in a space, there's not a capacity to do the deep, critical work that we're asking teachers to do in critically affirming spaces. So we have to lay the foundation of getting to know our students, one, so that there's capacity to do deep, critical work, so that they can trust us and respect us and want to hear what we have to say. I'll stop there because I can go on forever, and I'll pass the mic to Marco.

MARCO CENABRE

All excellent points. A few things stand out to me. One, just the comment—DEI, CRP, CSP. There are so many terms out there, like it was raised before, it's almost become meaningless. Even a term like culturally relevant—without learning relationships or with kids, then relevant to whom, exactly? How did you come to that specific determination? And like Dr. Cooper was saying earlier, schools have their own culture. So if you don't forge meaningful relationships in a consistent way with students...not just, "Let's do this one-off lesson on history during Hispanic Heritage Month and then proceed to do all our work 100% in English for the rest of the time." If we don't find meaningful ways to truly [1:15:37] culture, then affirmation isn't necessarily there. But just some specific strategies, even in a classroom.

A tradition I have every Monday and every Friday is sample questions. Today's question was (well, it was on Monday), "What is a meal you will always remember, and why? Think about that. I'll go first. Now, everyone share." And what comes out are the answers that really bring out people's culture. And it was simple. But in order to get there, you had to establish the trust. One, you have to invest your structured time. It's not just like, "Oh, wait, we're going to do this check-in one time ever, and then all of a sudden, we're going to go straight to the exit

ticket and do this stuff.” You have to invest your planned time and put actual work within the schedule that’s there. And with these consistent questions in a class culture, and in even better worlds, a school culture, getting to know each other and being curious and open to learn from each other is something that we do.

In order for culturally affirming practices to be implemented, that has to be there. Otherwise, it comes as these one-off things, or students who sit in silence, or the microaggressions, or straight up aggressions that do happen because if you don’t implement those practices and experiences of trust and build that community, then culturally affirming practices can actually be harmful. So just to raise everything from before, you have to understand who your students are, you have to get to know their families. You as yourself as a teacher and administrator also have to be open. Because if you don’t model being open, then your students won’t either. It’s that simple. You have to engage in the work and also just be there. That’s all.

DAVID LOPEZ

Is it all right, Erin, if I jump in with the next question? So it’s already a lot. I’m like, “Where do I even go?” because you’ve already offered us so much. But in many ways, I’m always amazed at the ways in which educators, in particular, educators of color, start with that personal work. It can both be from an affirming perspective. Marco, you offered both affirming and, I would argue, assaultive. Dr. Cooper, you talked about your experience being Rosa Parks. Brian, you talked about, and this one really stood out, that this is about my survival and the survival of my family in connection to Dr. Williams telling us that, “We don’t have a choice. We’ve got to show up. Our parents will go get locked up.” We have to be there, whether they’re harming us or not. Connecting that to survival.

While you offer so many different affirming practices, there are a couple of things that I want us to all hold and hopefully can speak to a question that I’m going to ask. The first is around school cultures. I agree that schools all have their own cultures. But I also want us to hold, as we think about the work that educators have to do in our call to action earlier, overwhelmingly, who gets to dictate what that culture is? And the ways in which those beliefs that inform our cultures are codified or enacted in practices, procedures, and policies at the school and district level. Brian, you also brought out the piece around the district cultures as well.

As we think about who has the power, historically and presently, to create what those cultures are...and the reason I want to highlight those pieces is because we have to then ask, “Why aren’t our students being affirmed overwhelmingly, in particular, our students of color?” You also offered around relationships and assessments. Brian spoke about assessing from our students’ points, which really connected to building relationships for me. That felt overwhelmingly as a practice. I’m wondering if you can talk about what is the personal work that educators have to do to build those healthy relationships?

I’ve heard countless teachers that get to know, and it reaffirms their deficit perspectives of our students and communities. I’m wondering, what is the personal work that educators have to do so when they engage in this relationship-building and getting to know students, that it turns into an affirming place? Especially, I’m overwhelmingly seeing our chats talking about white educators where we talk about cultural dissonance. So what is that personal work that we have to do as educators to build relationships and for those to be positive and not harmful,

so we're not at survival mode but thriving consistently in our school buildings, since we have to be there? That was a lot, did that question make sense?

DR. ALEXIS PATTERSON WILLIAMS

If there's not a particular order I'll go ahead and jump in, Dr. Cooper, unless you want to be the lead goose.

DR. AYANNA COOPER

No, by all means. I'll follow after your part. Please.

DR. ALEXIS PATTERSON WILLIAMS

I really appreciate the question, David, and I think, to me, it's the most important question. Because I fundamentally believe that if you don't do the self-work, the personal work...Beverly Tatum has an analogy that she uses, and she talks about how we are all smog breathers, that our society is full of smog, and that smog is the oppressive, racist viewpoints that exist. Sexist, misogynistic, homophobic. You can go down the list of all the -isms and the -ists that exist in our society. But that is the smog that we, as Americans, are breathing in. So we are smog breathers. Black, white, Asian—you are a smog breather. We are all complicit in breathing in this smog and maintaining the smoggy conditions. As I was sharing this example with one of my teachers that I was teaching in our program, he continued with the analogy, and he said, "We have to detox. Because if we're not, we're going to continue to take that smog with us." And to me, that's the personal work. We want to act on the system because it's easier to point out the flaws in the system than it is to see the flaws that are inherent inside of us.

How do I maintain linguistic dominance by mandating that students use the academic science language? That if they're not using the vocabulary of sciences, then what they said is not as correct or as academic as somebody who might use all of the technical language? I have the power as the teacher to set the norms of what is linguistically correct, appropriate, and most valued. And it's not to say that our students don't need the technical language of the field, but it is to say that when we say that that is the supreme language, and we know that that language is inherently middle-class and overwhelmingly white in terms of its origin, then we are saying that that language practice is better, is more academic, is more smart than the linguistic practices of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. And that's problematic.

We were raised like that. Most of us were in classrooms where we had to speak standardized English, and if we didn't, we weren't seen as smart. That's what all the books are written in that language. So we are acquired into that. That is the smog. But we have to do the work to realize that that's not affirming for our students. We can teach in more additive ways. So we have to do that deep self-work. There's a podcast that we did that really talked about ways for us to engage in doing that self-work. That is just one example. But I'll stop by saying there's a framework in research that talks about noticing. And that there are many things that a classroom educator—and this is for administrators, too—they we can notice when we're in schools and classrooms. And oftentimes, our training as teachers helps us notice the things that are around the academic. So for me, as a science teacher, I noticed things around science learning. But we've got to notice the issues of justice and equity that arise around language, around race, around culture. We have to notice that. And by noticing, we have to see it, and then we have to do the self-work to understand the systemic history so that we can interpret

it. If I see a Black child with his head down in the classroom, I'm not saying, "Oh, these Black kids, they don't do science. It's the white and the Asian students that engage in science." Because that trope is out there. So how do I do the learning, the studying, the development of my expertise that if I see a child's head down in my science classroom, that I don't lean on that trope, but I have some other knowledge that helps me make sense of the behavior that I've seen in a way that's critical so that I can respond in ways that are more just? So how do I see things that are related to equity, because we also want to evade issues of race and racism—don't make us comfortable to think about it. How do I make sense of it in ways that are robust and not reliant on these oppressive tropes? And then how do I respond in ways that are just and transformative? I'll stop there. And I will pass the mic to Dr. Cooper because I cut her off.

DR. AYANNA COOPER

No, no, no, thank you so much. I just want you to keep going. This is so exciting. I want to extend your thoughts, Dr. Patterson, by really encouraging us to engage as researchers. And I don't mean fancy stuff with clipboards. I like to view myself as an ethnographic researcher. What does it look like out in the field? I work alongside school leaders and leadership teams. I'm in the building, I'm in their offices, I'm in the classrooms. I encourage you to engage in qualitative and quantitative, and we call mixed methods research. Number one, you have to acknowledge that this work is laborious. How do you, as a person of color or as a white ally, engage in your own self-care? It is exhausting. And as folks get "woke," we also have to acknowledge that there are a number of us who have already been woke. And so, I'm so excited about your wokeness, but it doesn't necessarily change my reality or my experiences because this is the package that I'm in. When we look at whose work is getting published, whose research is getting funded, whose stories are being heard and shared out as the status quo.

I've been working alongside educators that have founded the first in the nation Haitian-Creole dual language program. I think the link was already put in the chat, but I'm so excited to do that. And one of the first things I learned about their work is that it took decades to get that program established. Decades. And folks were tired. They put everything they had into getting this off the ground. So imagine the patience... When folks say, "Be patient," I don't know what timeframe you're on, but I don't operate from that we have a lot of time. No, we don't. So let's not fool ourselves into thinking that we have a lot of time. I don't believe that we do. The time is right now.

Number one, definitely acknowledge that the work is laborious. You have to engage in self-care. Also, where have you included student voice? When we want to pat ourselves on the back and say, "Oh, we're doing all these super great things," OK, by whose standard? How are you measuring that we've done a good job, and where have you included student voice? And if you haven't done that, get some focus groups, pull some students together, and then be prepared to act upon it. Because it's one thing to say, "We heard you, and thanks for sharing," and then we don't do anything with it. Now, you've further marginalized me. So think about how we're taking the information that we have. In the positions of power that we sit in, what's our responsibility to do something with it? I'm going to pass the mic. This is so exciting. Thank you for the chat. I have this whole side group going on in the chat. I have so many ideas. Thank you for that. This is wonderful. Come on, Marco.

MARCO CENABRE

I think a lot of teachers who I've seen just in general and growing up as a student just have a habit to ask, "How are you doing?" in a really false sense. Like, "How are you doing?" when I'm walking away or something. And then, when someone opens up to "How am I doing?" and the student puts it out there, there's one of two things: "Oh, OK, got it," like you didn't really want to know, or two, this weird way to try to take a trauma or something and turn it into a positive, or some kind of story of heroism or some aspect of that. And I think in building positive, strong relationships with our students, one, we have to be more willing to be human in the range of emotion that comes with these relationships, especially as a teacher in a position of power and a student. A lot of times, conversations...because of how public schools are designed, it's like conferences, "How are you doing? How can you improve? What are the next steps? All right, here's your goal."

When students over and over again are conditioned to that, when you ask a question about how someone celebrates a holiday or something else, a lot of students get tripped up by that because the dynamic is strange. In just a tangible way, it sounds simple, but seriously, for real, just ask how someone is doing. Be genuine about it. You're not there to confer or try to gauge next steps. You're genuinely trying to get to know the people that you're teaching for the next 182-plus days. Because if you're going to be in a room with all these individuals, and yet you don't know siblings or stories or whatnot, there's a huge difference between a room full of individuals where people don't even know each other, and people who grow closer. But if every conversation is limited to just that, "I'm going to do this conference." "What's your next step? X, Y, Z." "How can you get your grades up?"—I'm guilty of this as well, where I get into that mode of exhaustion, then I kick back to what I know and what I've been taught. But in order to build those meaningful relationships, you have to be genuine. Really get to know your students and not just on a surface level.

And if they don't respond, cool. There are another 180 days to say, "How are you doing?" and all this stuff. Not everything has to be these isolated moments. There's time. And even beyond that, there's time, and not just this year. Not everything's is this race to the finish. Get to know your kids, and do your homework as well on equity and everything else, the patterns of oppression and the extent you're repeating those patterns of oppression, and reflect over and over again. Because if you don't know the history of education, white supremacy, and its effects, then you don't understand the way your actions, and who they affect, and the way you're replicating these things, inequity won't be reached. But that's an understatement, a huge caveat. So yes, do your homework, do your research, and also in the meantime, get to know your kids authentically. And I'll pass to Brian.

BRIAN KNOWLES

Thank you, Marco. Part of what I want to say is also something that my sister Alexis mentioned as well, kind of starting with self. Most definitely, starting with self. And looking at yourself in a way and education, within the scope of the work that we all lead and we are all part of, just having a growth mindset. Understanding that it's always a continuous process of evolution and just evolving. There's this concept known as cognitive reframing that I kind of use in a lot of professional development, is when you're met with new ideas and new information, or innovations, thoughts, and procedures and so forth, how we transform our thought process. Not just kind of add it to our existing thought process, but transform and being OK with that.

And one of the biggest obstacles I see within this work when it comes to educational leaders and educators really, truly, authentically create culturally sustaining spaces and developing relationships with students is, it's hard for people...and this kind of goes back... I was talking to a friend of mine—it seems like sometimes the more educated people become, the stupider we get sometimes. And sometimes it's real hard for somebody, "I'm Dr. Such-and-Such, and I've gotten to this high level of education because I've done everything right," when I've really done everything wrong. I've done things that have perpetuated oppression and repression of minoritized and historically marginalized groups of students. And it's real hard for someone to have that growth mindset when they feel like they've done everything right.

And one other thing that you said, Alexis, was about the smog. We're all breathing in the same air, we're all swimming in that polluted lake. So we're all part of the same deficient educational system of Eurocentric epistemology that we all come from. So you don't know what you just don't know. And it's OK. You don't know. But you take the time to become self-educated, you take the time to always reevaluate what you've done. When I do workshops, I never do the same workshop twice. I always change stuff because I'm always learning. And the funny thing is, I was sitting here watching the beginning of the presentation. I had my laptop open, and I was changing stuff as I was listening to you all. Because I'm learning here. I'm one of the so-called experts, and as experts, we should continue to build on our expertise. Just continue to learn how to grow with the knowledge and learn how to be evaluative and interrogative of yourself, have some sense of criticality when it comes to you. Not everybody else—it's easier to say what the system is going to do, what everybody else is going to do. But what about me? It even goes back to my days in the classroom. If I gave an assessment to my students, and a majority of them failed, one of the first things I would say is, "Man, these kids are dumb." I'd feel like, "Dang, I messed up. This is a whack-ass lesson." Excuse my language. "I did something wrong here, and I have to reteach this." And I'd even go back to the classroom, and it was some things I did that were amazing and some things I cringed about because of what I'd learned. So just having a growth mindset and being open to evolution and just being able to grow and build on what we know.

DAVID LOPEZ

Thank you all for offering such powerful responses and bits of wisdom. We wanted to move a little bit into responding to some of the participant questions. And I'm going to do a little bit of a pivot right here. We're getting a lot of questions from white participants about what they can do as white people. But I don't want to ask you that as educators of color. Instead, as that question comes up, if you're willing to, I want us to think about, and it's connected to what you've already offered—Dr. Cooper, you talked about allyship or being a coconspirator, and Dr. Williams, you brought up Dr. Tatum's work. And so, I'm wondering, what is the impact on educators of color when we have to respond to white folks asking us as people of color to let them know what they need to do? What is the impact on us, and if you don't feel comfortable adding there, if we think about that racial identity model, whether they're in that contact phase around lack of awareness, of race and racism, or they're all the way at autonomy, where we hope they're confronting racism daily. What is the impact on students?

So I leave that up to you on how you want to answer that is most comfortable to you. But what I am looking for is, what is the impact on us as folks of color in this work when we have coconspirators or allies, or even constant questions around what should white folks do. Dr. Cooper, you talked about that radical idea around our own rest and peace. What does it mean

for us to be able to be rested and peaceful as we show up every day doing this good work for our students and our communities?

DR. AYANNA COOPER

David, I've been thinking a lot about your question, and also I see the question in the chat, too, about as panel members, how do we...we get discouraged. I see Gene's question, thank you so much, "Do you ever get discouraged?" Every day, all day, multiple times a day! But it's these moments here that help affirm that this is the work that I know I should be doing. This is my life work for sure. It's a double-edged sword. I'm going to jump around a little bit...One of the things is, when you ask me what you could, if you're a white person, could be doing, in a sense, you're still putting it back on me. You might think it's helpful, but instead, maybe come with your ideas of what you think you can do. First and foremost, come to the table with some ideas, and let's have a conversation. But it shouldn't just be, "What can I do?" Because now you've put the load back on me to work it all out, and unpack it for you, and give it back, then, "Let's go ahead and march out with our signs because that's what we feel good about." So that's one of the things that comes to mind.

Another about being discouraged is, you really have to believe in the work that you're doing, and you almost have to have this super hearing of being able to drown out the people who are the naysayers. Where is the discouragement coming from? And I'm going to talk about my book here just a little bit. I coauthored a book, *Black Immigrants in the United States: Essays Around the Power of Language and Voice*. That's an edited volume with Dr. Awad Ibrahim. His research centered around the Black immigrant experience in Canada, and I wanted that work to be captured here in the US. So number one, again, whose voice is being published? Whose voice is being heard? Who are we paying attention to, if you will?

That's one of the pieces. The other book that I wrote is the closest I'll get in this lifetime to having twins because I published two books in the same year. They both came out in September of 2020. The other one is *And Justice for Els*, which is framed around the Civil Rights mandate for school leaders and school leadership teams. Making sure we're aware of what those mandates are and what the expected outcomes are because with all the work that we're doing, let's stop, backtrack, and look at the history.

I heard some of the panel members talking about, "You have to know your history. You have to know from whence you came so you don't continue to do damage." Taking a look at those mandates and self-evaluating our schools and school communities around those is an important part of the work. And with that book, I want to just link a story about discouragement. When some of the reviewers gave some feedback about the book, they said, "Everybody knows this. This is a really good book, but everybody knows this. We already know this." And I don't believe that's true. I don't believe everybody already knows it because my question back to the reviewers was, "Well, then how come we keep having civil rights violations?" If everybody knows it, there's a correlation here. The violations keep going up, so clearly, there are people that need to know it.

But if I had stopped right there, or if I had taken that first "no" I got from a different vendor that said, "Oh, no, no, no, we already have a book on multilingual learners in the queue. We're all set here," what if I would have stopped? Who are we listening to? And are those voices healthy? Because they can be quite damaging, and they can slow the process down. But if you know in your core this is the work you need to be doing, and these are the people you need to

be collaborating with, then you keep pressing forward. And I hope that lands with somebody because I'm not on this panel by mistake. I don't have to tell the backstory, but there's no mistake here. I was meant to be here. I was meant to be connected with this panel. And that's important to me. So thank you.

DAVID LOPEZ

I don't want to call on anybody because I want this...if you want to answer the question.

DR. ALEXIS PATTERSON WILLIAMS

I've gotten lost in the soup a little bit, but I was writing down thoughts to your questions. So while I don't remember the full question, I have some thoughts and responses. So I'll just say what kind of came up for me. My first thought as I was hearing David's question is, you have to respond from your heart and not from what you think I want you to do, not from what you think is the politically correct or trendy thing to do. I remember this past summer, when all of the racial hell kind of broke loose for some folks, because it's been breaking loose for a long time, but for some folks, it just kind of bubbled to the surface.

And that's OK. But I was inundated with emails, text messages, and phone calls that I didn't answer or respond to, like, "What can I do? How can I help?" And I appreciate the intention behind it, and I saw these memes like, "Check on a Black friend, they're not OK." And I said, "Don't check on me. Because if you haven't been checking on me up to this point, then I don't want to hear from you." And I don't mean it in a mean way, but I mean that if we don't have that relationship, in my time of deep mourning, I don't need you to come into that space. Just let me have my moment because you don't know what I need. And the people who know me, who have been rocking with me, they knew what I needed. They knew how to check on me in a way that was appropriate because they knew me.

I think folks need to do what comes in their heart to do. Just do it. You don't have to announce that you're doing it. You don't have to ask me if it's what I want. Just do it. I have a coworker; she and I have bumped heads. Matter of fact, she microassaulted me in a few public ways and microassaulted the community in very public ways. And I was at the point where I would never speak to this colleague again outside of needing to professionally because I like my job. But the thing that I can say about this colleague is that I don't know what prompted it, it was not this summer or last summer's events. This colleague was doing their work. The colleague didn't announce to me that they were doing their work. I didn't call the colleague out because I don't have the energy. The colleague decided to do the work on their own and has shown up in tangible ways, has been vocal, has supported me and others.

And to me, that's what I appreciated. You didn't tell me anything. I see it. I see that you've been doing your history. I see that you've been going to therapy. I see that you've been doing whatever you need to do to be better, to progress, to transform, as Brian said earlier. And that's what I appreciated. Don't ask me. Just do what comes to your heart and transform. And we will see that work. And then, the only other thing I want to add to Gene's great question about discouragement, when I get discouraged, I persist because I have to. I have a Black boy. I have a 5-month-old Black boy. I had students who I love, who I want to see thrive and succeed. I have a brother who had an extensively different educational experience than I did going through the same schools.

So I don't have a choice. I have to persist. This work is my life. It is my family. It is my community. I have to persist. I don't get to retreat when I get exhausted, when I get assaulted, when I get frustrated. To me, what I would say to folks who are allies in this work is, persist through the difficulty because it's going to come. And resist the desire to retreat when you experience the difficulty. Because that's the privilege that I don't have. And I don't feel like we're allies and we're linking up shoulder to shoulder when it gets rough, and I look, and you're gone because you're retreating. That's what I need, is for you to just do what comes authentically to you and to be there when it gets rough and rocky because it is.

BRIAN KNOWLES

It's real hard to come behind these powerful sisters, just the words that they say. But one of the things I want to say, when you say discouragement, every day. I wake up discouraged, to be honest with you. And I go to bed discouraged with this work. And not only just the resistance from racism and a racist institution, but sometimes I get discouraged by my own people sometimes. Some of us get into these roles, we move up, we get that little paycheck, and we want to protect that. We don't want to rock the boat too much. We don't want to go too Black, too radical and so forth. We want to kind of tame it down and backtrack a little bit with this work.

But when it comes to, when we say whites coming to us, because one of my homeboys, he jokes with me all the time, he works in the school district here in Palm Beach County. And he calls me and says, "You are the Black man for the school district, right?" So anytime a Black issue arises, I have to come up with a response and all that kind of stuff. And I even, at one point, started telling him, "No. Y'all figure this out." And one of the points is that we need to start, let's stop using the word "ally" sometimes. Let's try to transcend that. Let's recognize that we're all part of the same human family. Because allyship also comes with stipulations. Allyship comes with terms and conditions. During World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union were allies, and a couple years later, they were bitter enemies for the next couple decades.

Even in 2020, we had this almost racial reckoning that almost happened when we were in separate spaces. But as soon as we transitioned back to the same spaces, it was like, "OK, we're done with that, right?" So just really transitioning and understanding that we're all part of the same human family, share the same fabric of society, and start to tear down some of those social constructs known as race. Understanding that if one part of the human family suffers, then we all suffer. This is not one of those things where it's just one particular group of people. We need to understand that it impacts us universally and really recognize the pure humanity and understand that we all want the same thing. We may have different philosophies and ways of getting that, but we all want the same things out of life.

Another thing you said also, Alexis, I think about that all the time when I want to retreat, myself. Be like, I just want to go do something mundane that's not as meaningful sometimes so I can just not be exhausted by it, but at the same time, I have a daughter. I have a daughter that'll be 13 soon, and she may have kids. And when I go into a classroom and I see Black boys sitting in the classroom, I don't see them. That's me right there. Therefore, I'm part of that same collective. Same people. That's me. So just recognizing that keeps me kind of motivated and keeps me going. And last thing I want to say—we'll wrap it up here—What really keeps me going is, a year ago, I had a conversation with Dr. James Banks. It was surreal. "I'm sitting here, talking to James Banks on Zoom." And one of the things he told me and advised me was,

“You work with the willing. Stop going out there trying to convert people and trying to convince people to do what’s right. Find a group of people, a group of teachers, administrators who have bought in to what you’re trying to do and are trying to do the same thing. And push in with those who are willing to do the work.” I guess I’ll pass the mic to Brother Marco if he wants to say something.

MARCO CENABRE

I’ll be brief. In regards to the white ally, coconspirator conversation, which is loaded, a quick thing. In a really intellectual, tangible way, know the difference between interpersonal and structural racism before entering a conversation on race because if entering with the definition of just interpersonal, it becomes a thing of, “Wait.” And I experienced this a lot with a lot of my colleagues of, “Wait, I don’t do that. I’m not racist because X, Y, and Z.” It’s like, I’m not here to internalize your anxiety over your unlearning or whatever process that you’re going through. But if you come to the conversation more informed of the histories of white supremacy and understand that we’re all affected by white supremacy, and some more so than others—which is the understatement of the century—different identities have different privileges, and different burdens, and different strengths and other things that come with it. And that comes from not just an inspirational thing, but from legal, legislature, law and everything else. So understand the history of race and racism and its purpose before entering that conversation. And find your people. Who are you open with to have these conversations on race, on identity that’s not just the person of color at the staff meeting who’s the one person speaking? I, personally, want to go home, want to go watch TV, and drink tea or something. I’m not trying to have this conversation about race on the way to my car. But again, find your people, do your homework, and that’s it, I think. Well, that’s not it. There’s so much more. But that’s it within this one minute.

ERIN BROWDER

I just want to echo all the praise, and thanks, and gratitude that we see in our chat because I feel really guilty about ending or closing out this conversation. But I couldn’t be more overjoyed of being in a community with you all given the humanizing approach and conversation that we all got to witness between you. On the beginning slide, I was like, “Y’all are going to breathe life into this presentation,” and that is what happened here. And when we think about our human experience, it’s the highs and the lows. And I just really appreciate you all being so transparent, and open, and willing, and ready to share. I’m just super grateful. It was medicine. That’s what I chatted to my people offline, that this conversation felt like medicine, so thank you.

And with that, we are going to close out. We know that we’re at time. Thank you all for joining us. I think my colleague Lori has a couple of quick slides to share with you all. And we’re not going to be able to spend too much time on the one-word closing, but we invite folks to just share one word that describes how you’re feeling after being a part of this conversation for the last two hours. We appreciate you. And I’ll hand it off to Lori. Thank you so much.

LORI VAN HOUTEN

Thanks a lot, Erin. And thank you to our panelists and to everyone for joining us today. Just a reminder that in two weeks, we have part two focusing on a leadership perspective, an orientation to this work, so please join us for that. Christine is putting the registration link in the chat. And also, know that in the next day or so, we’re going to send you the slides and the

link for the survey, but the link for the survey is also in the chat. So if you want to take a few minutes right now to fill that out, we'd really appreciate it. And again, thank you so much to everyone. We are deeply grateful. Look at these words coming up in the chat: encouraged, inspired. I know I'm going to be doing a lot of reflecting as soon as I can save this chat and take a look at it again. So thank you again, everyone.

ERIN BROWDER

Thank you all for joining us. Thank you, panelists, for sharing. We appreciate your offerings. Thank you. Let's get free, y'all. Let's do the work.