



Creating Culturally Affirming Spaces: A Systems Orientation

Presenters:

Erin Browder
David Lopez
Rawlin Rosario
Lori Van Houten

Panelists:

Dr. Ayana Allen-Handy
Dr. Ayanna Cooper
Jabari Lyles
Dr. Rosa Perez-Isiah
Reed Swier

Using the Zoom Platform

A few helpful tips...



If you cannot hear audio, call 669-900-6833 and enter the code 913 9359 7805#



When you post into the chat, set it to send to “Everyone”



Closed captions are available

Technical questions? Tag @DelpheanQuan in the chat

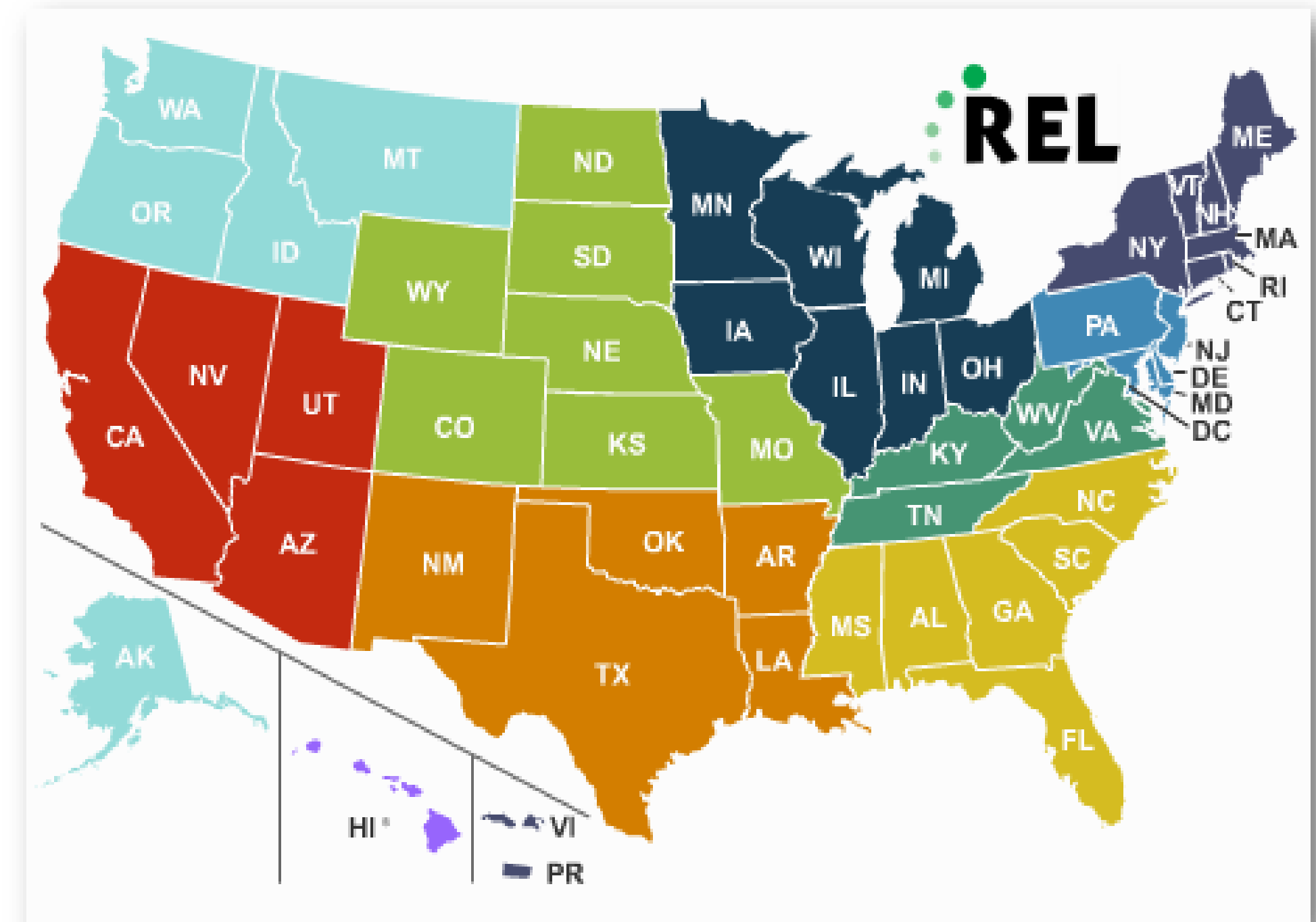
Check Your Email



- We'll be sending a survey link and the slides shortly after the webinar
- The webinar recording and list of resources will be available in a few weeks

Regional Educational Laboratory West

- Conduct applied research
- Provide technical support around data collection, evidence use, and research
- Facilitate dissemination of actionable research evidence



Objectives

- Deepen understanding of culturally affirming school and classroom cultures and climates and how they shape student and staff outcomes
- Explore systemic approaches for embedding culturally affirming spaces and practices at the school and district level
- Learn about promising leadership practices and adult behaviors that foster culturally affirmative schooling experiences from practitioners in the field

Agenda

- ❖ Culturally Affirming Systems – What They Are and What They Aren't
 - ❖ Review of Session 1 Core Concepts
 - ❖ School and Systems Culture
 - ❖ Culturally Responsive Leadership Competencies and Behaviors
 - ❖ Transformative/Equitable Systems
- ❖ Panel Discussion: Creating systems and systemic culture that are culturally affirming for culturally, racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students
- ❖ Q&A
- ❖ Closing and Survey

Today's Presenters



Erin Browder
Senior Program Associate
REL West



David Lopez
Senior Technical
Assistance Specialist
WestEd



Rawlin Rosario
Program Associate II
WestEd



Lori Van Houten
Senior Program Associate
REL West

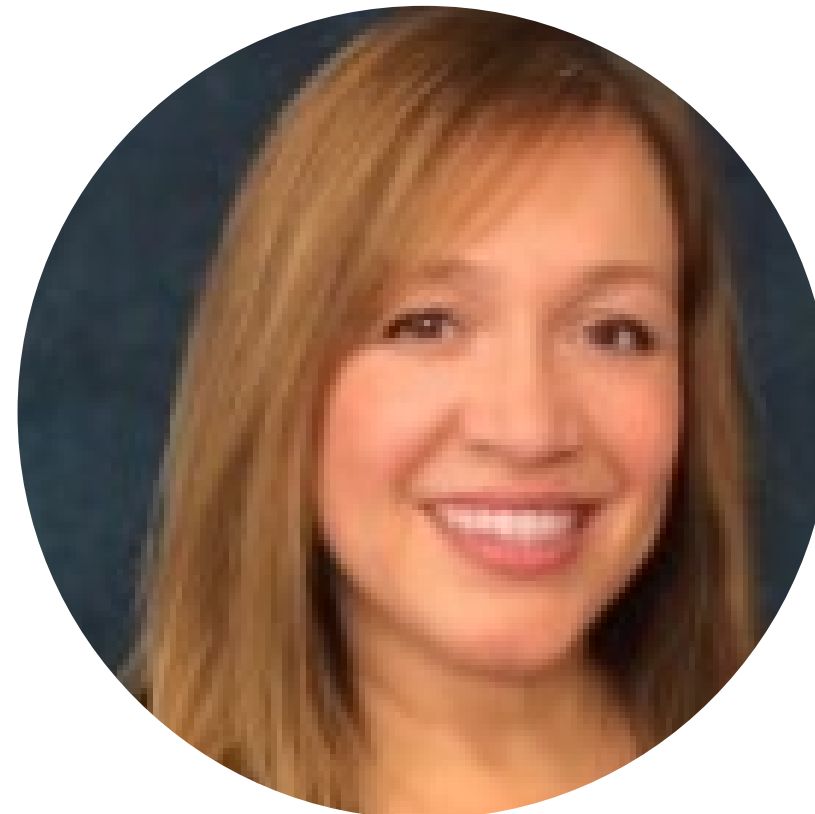
Today's Panelists



Dr. Ayana Allen-Handy
Researcher, Drexel
University; Director,
Justice-Oriented Youth
Education Lab



Dr. Ayanna Cooper
Author and Consultant



Dr. Rosa Perez-Isiah
Director of Elementary
Education, Equity & Access:
Norwalk-La Mirada Unified
School District



Jabari Lyles
LGBTQ Inclusion
Consultant, Director of
LGBTQ Affairs for the
Office of the Mayor,
Baltimore City



Reed Swier
Associate Director of
Training and Development,
NYU Metro

Who is on the webinar?

Polls:

- What is your role?
- How familiar are you with systems, policies, and practices that create culturally affirming spaces in schools and classrooms?



Working Agreements

- Keep confidentiality
- Focus on intent v. impact
- Knowing when to step forward and step back
- Stay in the room (struggle together)
- Interrogate self and systems
- Accept lack of closure



Culturally Affirming Practices: What They Are and What They Aren't

Culturally Affirming Spaces: Webinar 1 Recap



Culture in Schools



Culturally Affirming Spaces

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

Price-Dennis et al., 2017; Alim & Paris, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Ferlazzo, 2017

Cultural assets are resources for new learning and meaning making

Types of Microaggressions

Verbal	Behavioral	Microassaults	Microinvalidations	Microinsults
A comment or question that is hurtful or stigmatizing to a certain marginalized group of people. For example, saying, “You’re so smart for a girl.”	Someone behaves in a way that is hurtful or discriminatory to a certain group of people. For example, a teacher ignoring a Black student who raised his hand first and instead calling on a white student.	A person intentionally behaves in a discriminatory way while not intending to be offensive. For example, a person telling a racist joke then saying, “I was just joking.”	A person’s comment invalidates or undermines the experiences of a certain group of people. For example, a white person telling a Black person that “racism does not exist in our school.”	A comment or action that is unintentionally discriminatory. For example, a person saying to an Indian graduate student, “Your people must be so proud.”

Allen et al., 2013; Nadal, 2014; Goodman, 2011; Harrison & Tanner, 2018

What is the impact of culturally harmful experiences and daily microaggressions?

Internalized Devaluation

- Feelings of unworthiness or undeserving
- Feeling unaccomplished or that have little to no talent or skills
- Low self-esteem and confidence

Assaulted Sense of Self

- Unhealthy worldview
- Inability or struggle towards goal setting
- Narrowing sense of time
- Increased arousal
- Mistrusting

Internalized Voicelessness

- Not speaking up for themselves
- Limited demonstration of agency
- Appeasement or fawning as a stress response
- Limited emotional expressions

Hardy, 2013

Creating Culturally Affirming Spaces: A Systems Orientation

In what ways do we experience the culture of schools and school systems?



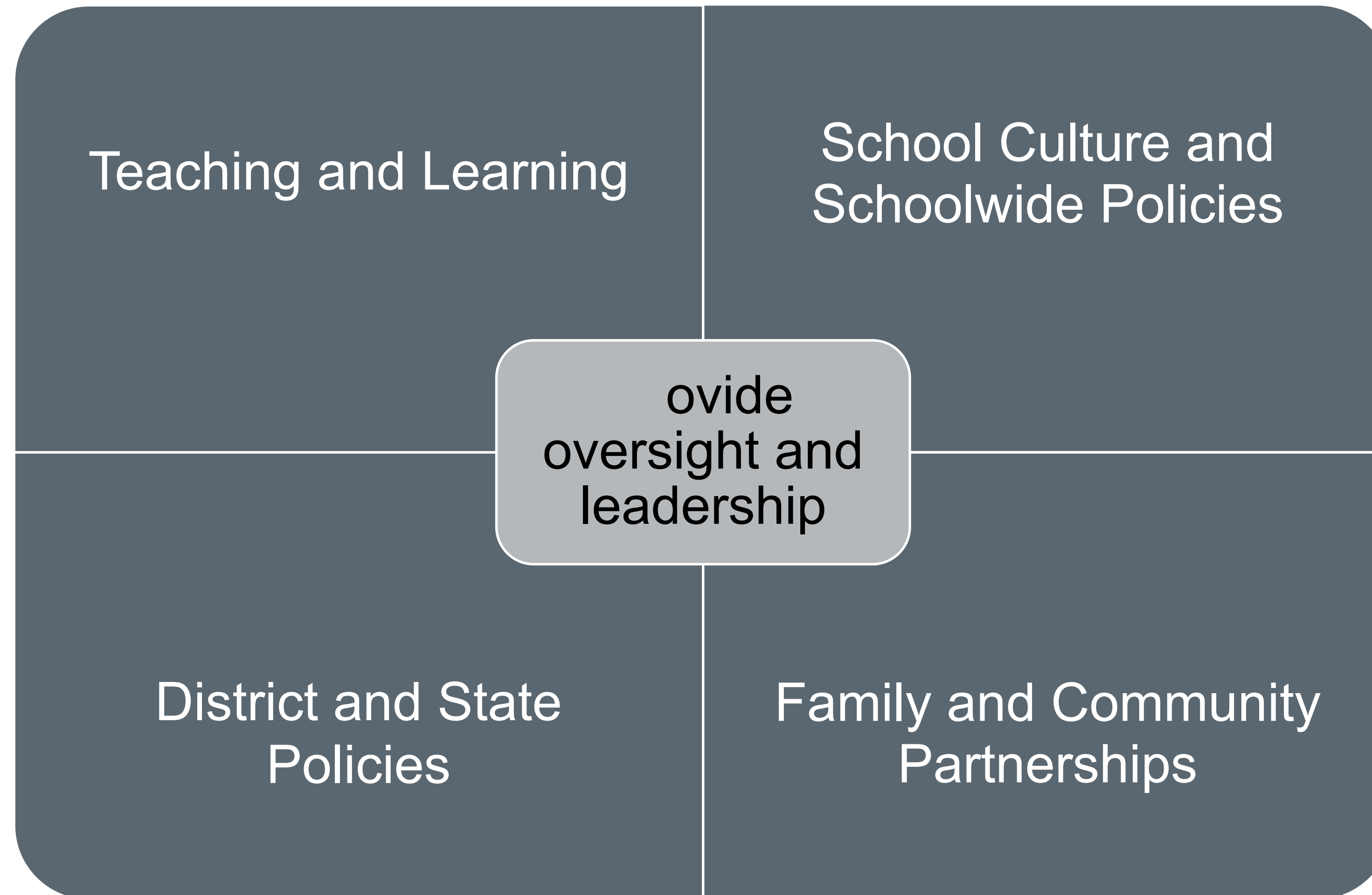
Systems Culture



- Language used to describe students and families
- Shared beliefs
- Communication behaviors
- Policies
- Shared norms
- Practices
- Acceptable behaviors
- Who is being held accountable, etc.
- Professional learning
- Partnership

Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets.

District Systemic Focus



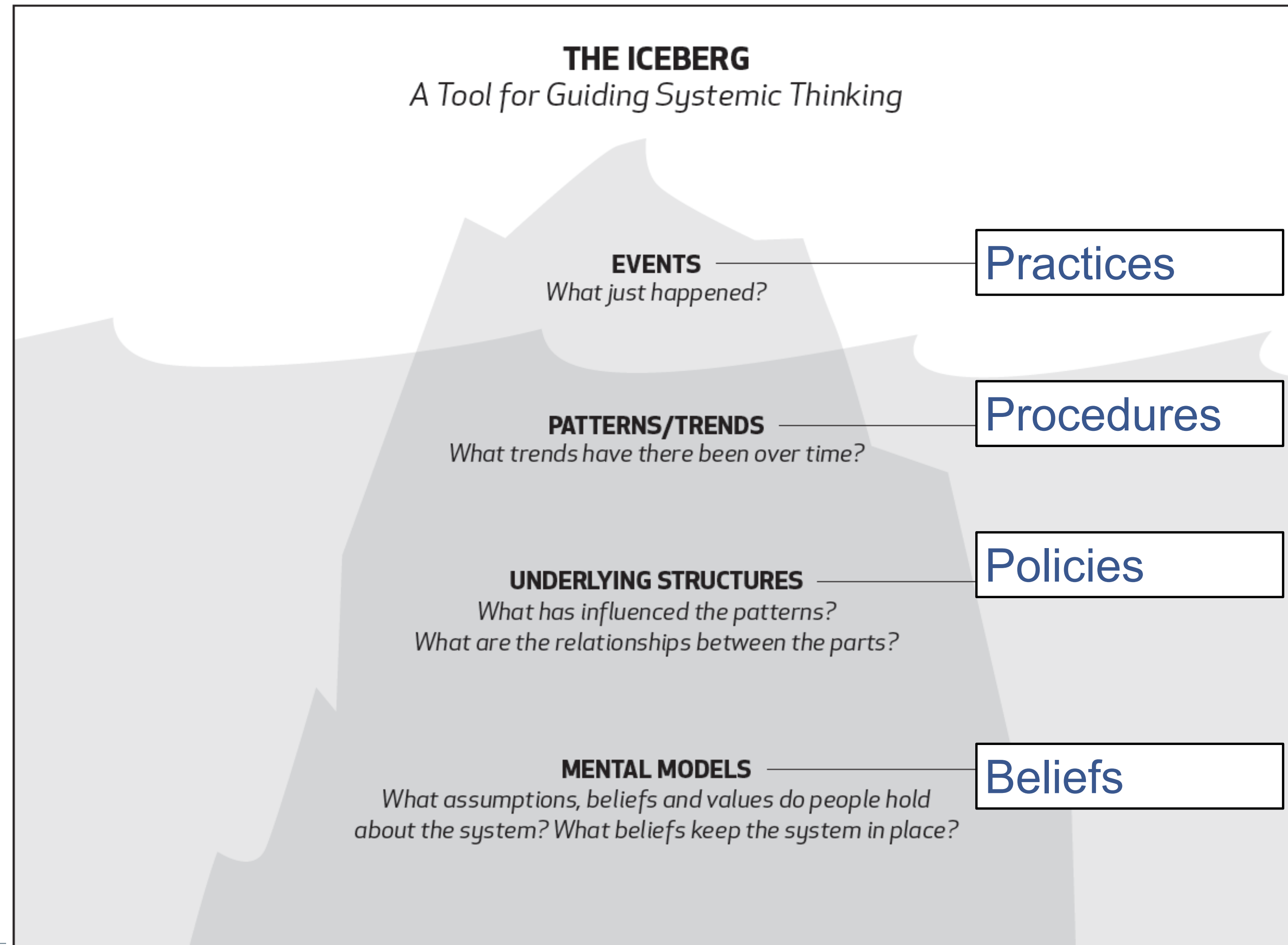
BELE Framework, n.d.

Common Systems Barriers

- A culture of compliance
- Implicit and explicit bias and incongruent beliefs
- Overreliance on structural changes
- Siloed or departments working in isolation
- Not regularly looking at disaggregated data and addressing challenges
- Lack of systemwide organization around identified approach or strategy
- Focusing on one aspect and not examining system as a whole
- Political and relational challenges
- Failing to acknowledge blind spots and not having a plan for addressing obstacles

Elrod & Kezar, 2017; Childress, Elmore, & Grossman, 2006; Theoharis, 2010

Much of the System is Beneath the Surface



Nishizuka, 2018

The ways we experience culture: The Culture Tree

CONCRETE: Observable elements

food, dress, music, holidays

Low emotional charge

BEHAVIORAL: Unspoken rules, social norms

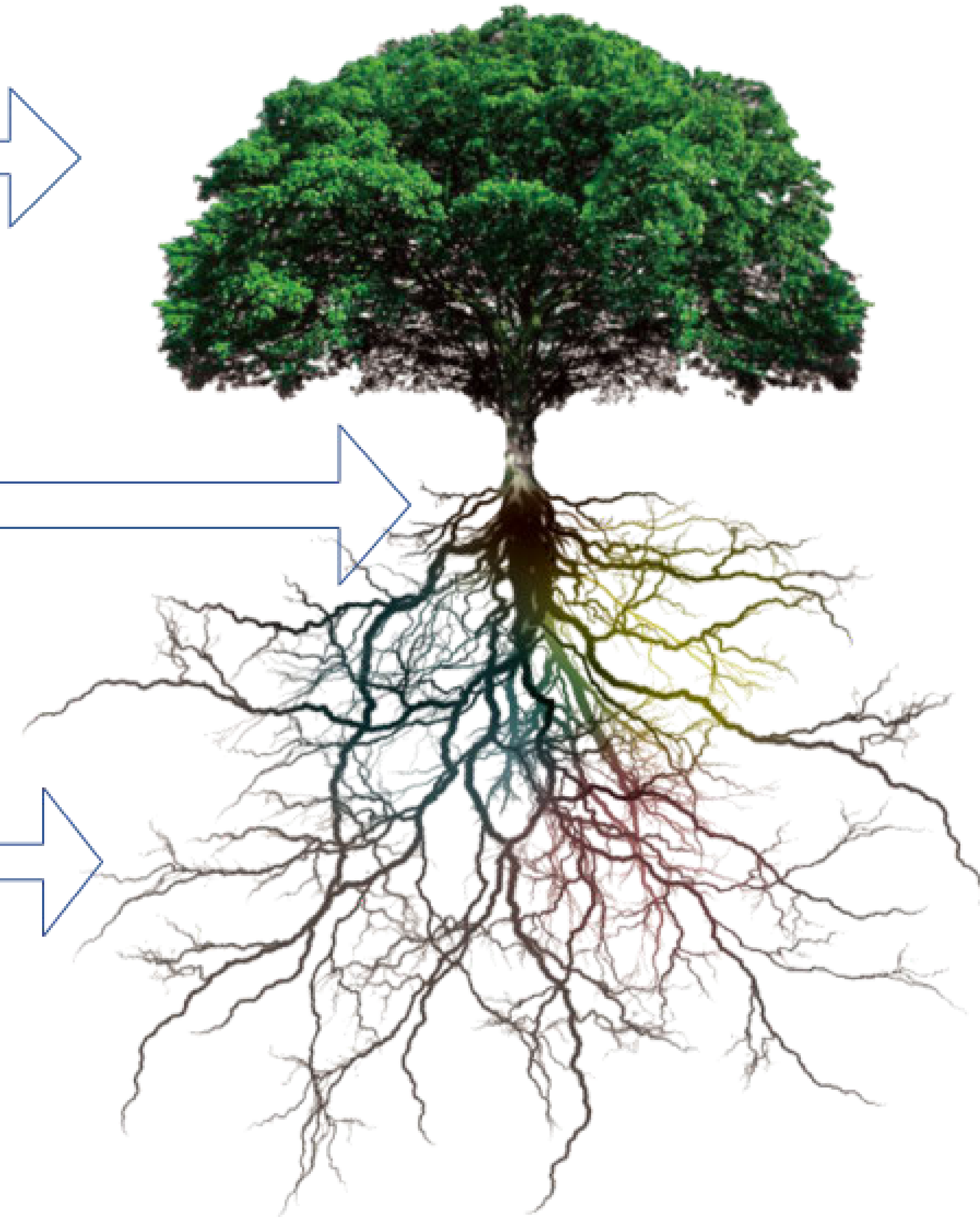
Nonverbal communication, eye contact, personal space, parenting, handling emotions, concepts of time

Strong emotional charge

SYMBOLIC: Abstract, values, core beliefs

Worldview, spirituality, fairness, concepts of self, decision making, cultural archetypes

Intense emotional charge



Reference: Hammond, 2015; Hidalgo, 1993.

Three Types of Bias-Based Beliefs

Color Evasiveness

A racial ideology where one's social identities are ignored, frames commonalities between individuals, and neglects the prevalence of racism and other social bias as it omits race, gender, and other social identities from an individual's existence and experience.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003)

“I try not to notice a child's race or skin color in the classroom setting.”

“Sometimes I wonder why we can't see each other as individuals instead of race always being an issue.”

Deficit Thinking

An ideology used within all levels of educational systems to explain academic performance as a result of deficiencies within an individual and group. It discounts the presence of systemic inequalities as the result of race-based processes, practices, and policies. The foundation of deficit thinking is—genetic pathology and culture of poverty.

Richard Valencia (1997)

“Students of color from disadvantaged homes just seem to show a lack of initiative.”

“The values and beliefs shared by those in disadvantaged neighborhoods tend to go against school values and beliefs about what makes up a good education.”

Poverty Disciplining Belief

Focuses on changing the behaviors and thinking of individuals from low-income backgrounds so that they adopt behaviors as necessary/required for social mobility. A second component of this belief involves the premise that poverty causes compromised development among children and family units.

Fergus (2017)

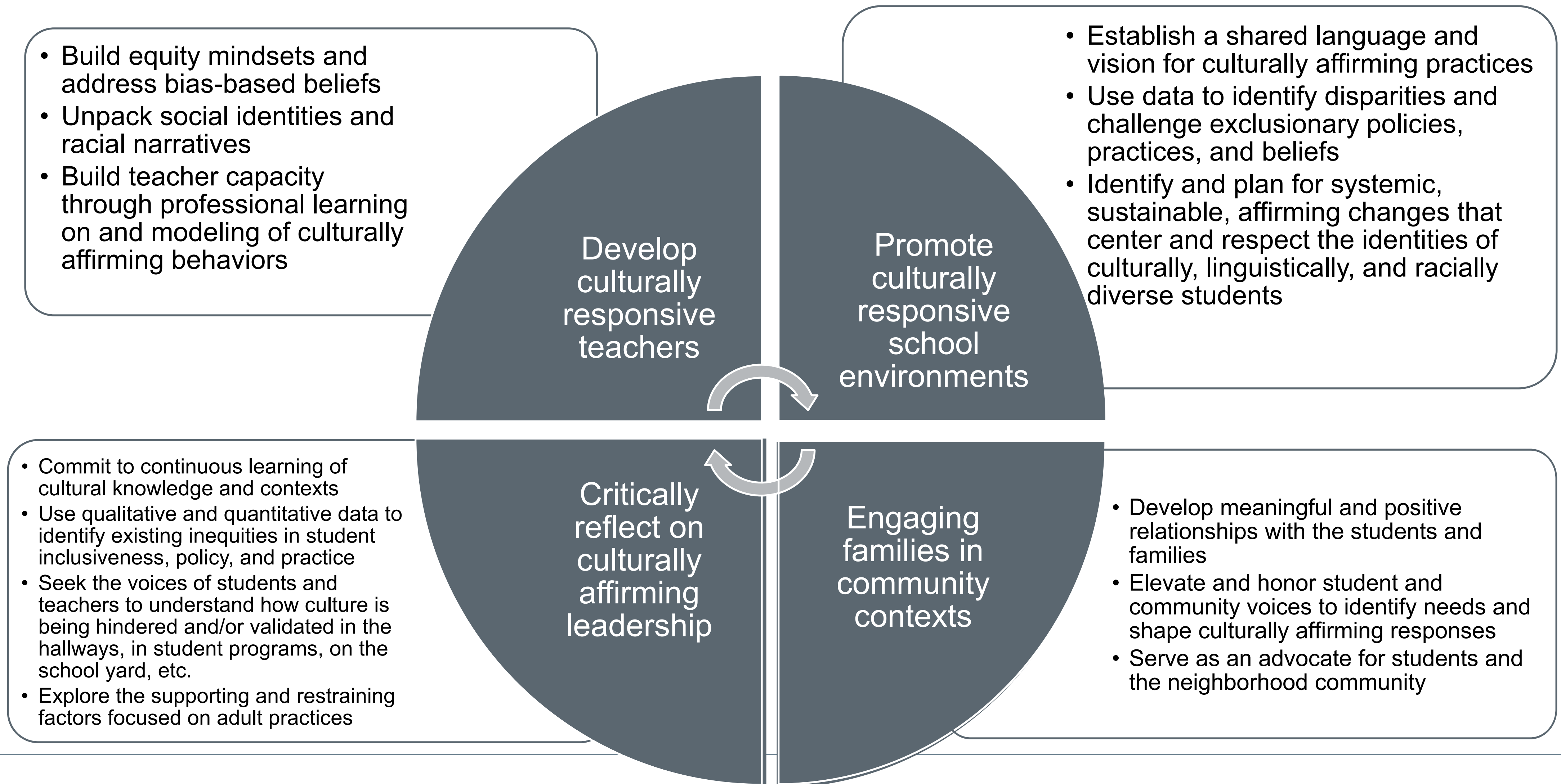
“Poor people don't know the value of education and need to be educated about its value. Poor kids are not exposed to the type of grit necessary to be successful in school.”

“Discipline and structure are important tools when working with poor kids.”

“They need to pull up their pants; otherwise they won't get jobs.”

We focus on shifting adult practices, we don't fix kids.

Culturally Responsive Leadership (Khalifa, 2016)



Students must see themselves in learning.



Addressing Systemic Barriers

Challenges	Anticipatory Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Culture of nice• Lack of self-awareness• Race-neutral conversations and approaches• Sticking to a protocol no matter what• Lack of partner inclusion• Not having a clear idea of problem seeking to address• Avoiding beliefs, mindsets work• Understating race• White silence• Defensiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practice Courageous Conversations• Provide real-world examples of leaders and systems engaging in this work• Establish norms and working agreements• Modifying a protocol• Using strategies to build an “on ramp”• Establishing a shared language with commonly held definitions and terms• Facilitate vigorously and vigilantly (e.g., mindful of microaggressions)• Identify patterns of participation• Establishing shared/collective responsibility• Setting up safe spaces• Asking questions and use paraphrasing to clarify what was heard

Roegman et al., 2019

Starting Points

- Building a task force, team to initiate this work in your district
- Learn your data for places to start—root cause analysis, equity review
- Utilize self-assessment tools as a team to calibrate and help you identify
- Motivational, interviewing, youth-participation action research (YPAR) to learn the lived experiences of your constituents
- Implement equity-centered protocols, resources
- Engage regularly with critical questions that help to refocus and recenter the work at hand, such as these focusing questions (Garmston & Wellman, 2016)
 - Who are we?
 - Why are we doing this?
 - Why are we doing this this way?

The 4th grade teacher started using poetry and hip hop to get him to fall in love with writing and to find his voice. He starts getting fours in writing and I'm just like, oh my God! And now he's so arrogant about his writing as if he's always been good at it. But it's like that's just an example of being able to bring in curriculum that is relevant and that is culturally relevant and means something to kids. That's been really important for us.

Parent
Baldwin Hills Elementary School
Los Angeles Unified School District

Personal and Professional Reflection:

Of the research and information presented, what resonates with you the most and why? How might that piece be used in systems change work at your school, district, or organization?



Panel Discussion

Creating systems and systemic culture that are culturally affirming for culturally, racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students



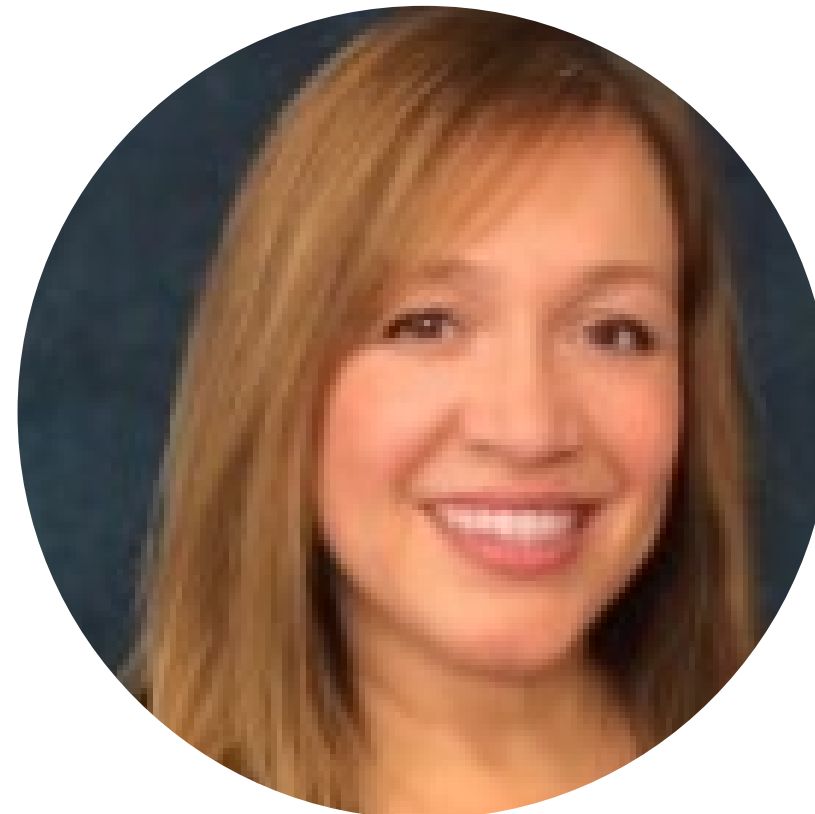
Today's Panelists



Dr. Ayana Allen-Handy
Researcher, Drexel
University; Director,
Justice-Oriented Youth
Education Lab



Dr. Ayanna Cooper
Author and Consultant



Dr. Rosa Perez-Isiah
Director of Elementary
Education, Equity & Access:
Norwalk-La Mirada Unified
School District



Jabari Lyles
LGBTQ Inclusion
Consultant, Director of
LGBTQ Affairs for the
Office of the Mayor,
Baltimore City



Reed Swier
Associate Director of
Training and Development,
NYU Metro

Ayana Allen-Handy, PhD

- Researcher focused on justice-oriented urban education
- Directs the Justice-Oriented Youth Education Lab, which seeks to equalize traditional research methods and center them on lived experiences, cultural knowledge, and expertise of our youth and community members



Ayanna Cooper, EdD

- Educational consultant, author, professor, and advocate for culturally and linguistically diverse learners
- Held positions as an English as a Second Language teacher, ELL Instructional Coach, Urban Education Teacher Supervisor, ELL/Title III Director, and ELL/Bilingual Program Specialist



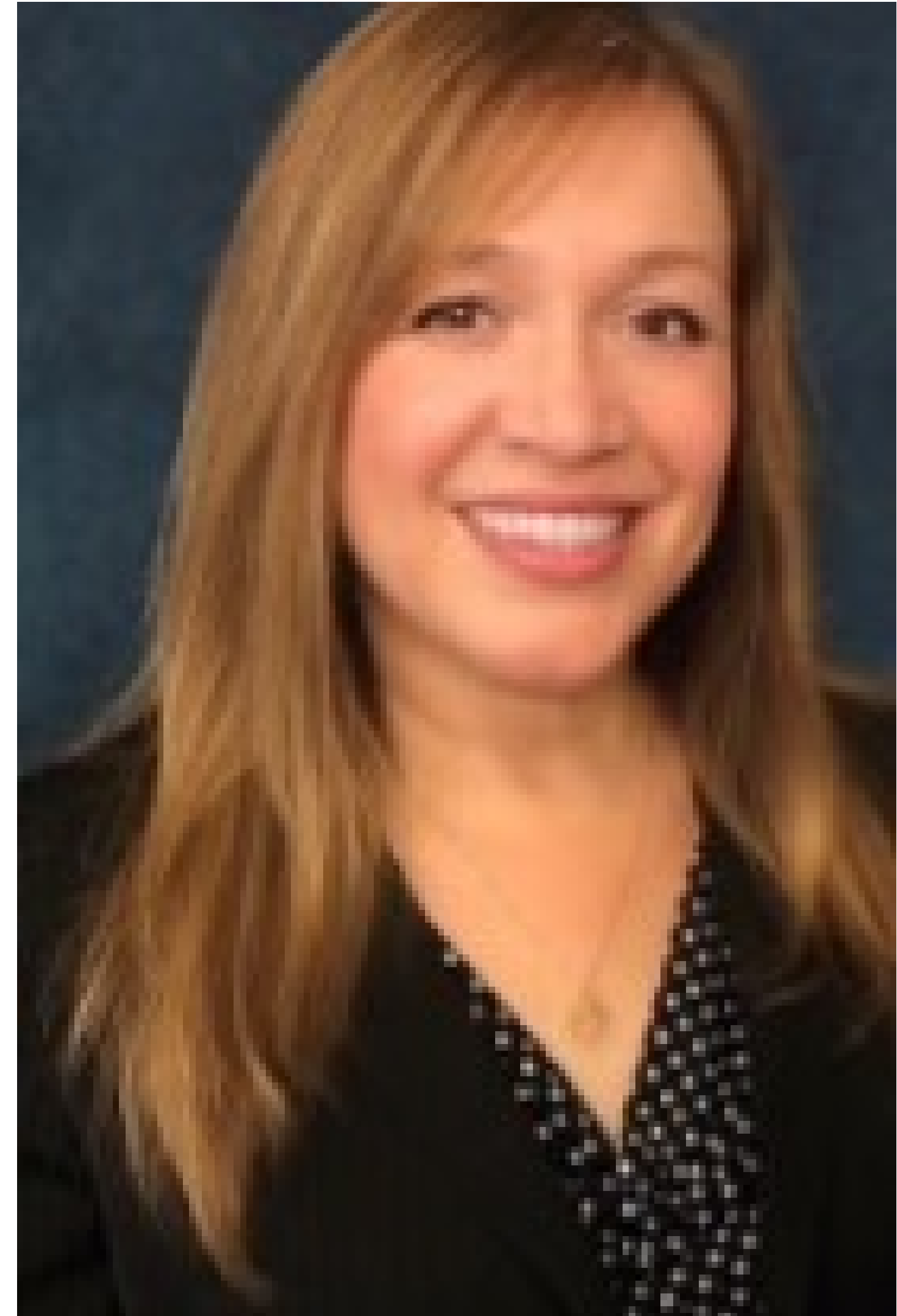
Jabari Lyles

- LGBTQ inclusion consultant and first-ever Director of LGBTQ Affairs for the Office of the Mayor in Baltimore City
- Former elementary and middle school teacher and a K–12 education advocate who draws on a history and career as an educator, community leader, and public administrator to teach others how to create safe, affirming spaces for LGBTQ youth in schools



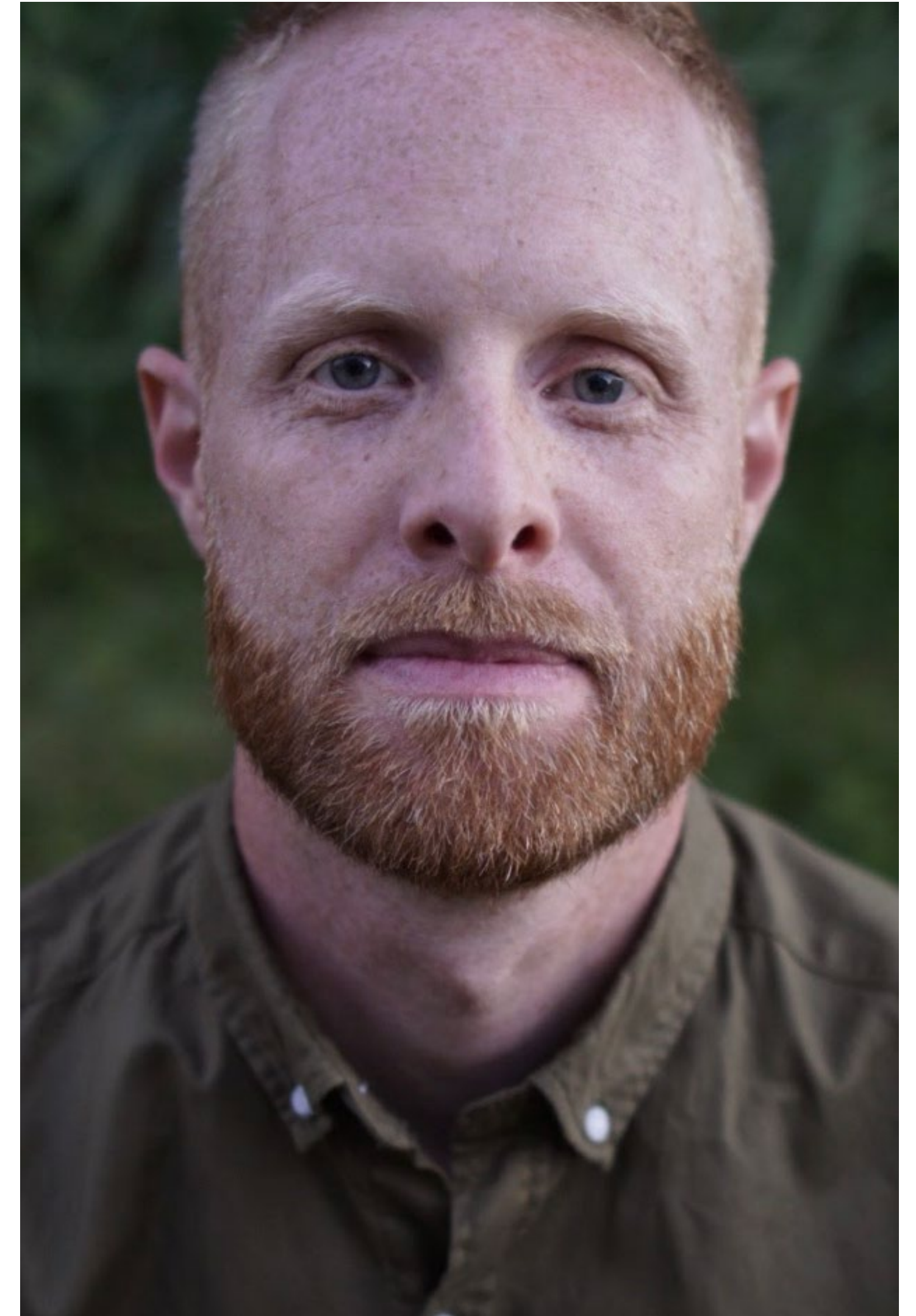
Rosa Perez-Isiah, EdD

- Social justice educational leader, advocate for equity, author, speaker
- Director of Elementary, Equity, and Access for Norwalk-La Mirada USD in California who is passionate about equity and access, multilingual education, leadership, and closing opportunity gaps for historically underserved students



Reed Swier, MEd

- Promotes equity and opportunity in education as the Associate Director of Training and Development at The Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, an NYU Steinhardt department
- Former teacher and administrator with a focus on building the capacity of educational institutions to understand the systems of inequality that disproportionately impact students



Discussion Prompts

- In your line of work, please share an example of what culturally affirming practices look like from a leadership perspective and/or systems level.
- How do we work to reduce and transform systemic harm in schooling and school systems?
- What does it look like for groups and systems to embrace this work on a collective level? What does accountability look like at different levels of the system?
- How do we engage power holders such as school boards and other key decisionmakers?
- What is the next avenue or focus in your work?
- Share an insight or *pearl of wisdom* for our audience.

Questions and Answers



Let's Hear From You...



Type into the chat box

Questions? Reflections? Insights?

Closing activity:

Name one action you will take following today's webinar



Check Your Email

- ❖ Survey link
- ❖ Webinar 2 slides
- ❖ Facebook livestream recording
- ❖ Webinar 2 recording and resources

Watch for emails from
relwest@wested.org





Thank You!

This presentation was prepared for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0012 by Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) West at WestEd. The content of the presentation does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

References

- Alim, H. S., & Paris, D. (Eds.). (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*. Teachers College Press.
- Allen, A., Scott, L. M., & Lewis, C. W. (2013). Racial microaggressions and African American and Hispanic students in urban schools: A call for culturally affirming education. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 3(2), 117–129.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2003). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and persistence of racial inequality in America*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Childress, S., Elmore, R., & Grossman, A. (2006). How to manage urban school districts. *Harvard Business Review*, 84(11), 55.
- Elrod, S., & Kezar, A. (2017). Increasing student success in STEM: Summary of a guide to systemic institutional change. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 49(4), 26–34.
- Fergus, E. (2017). Interrogating the White teacher and students of color integration project: Understanding the role of bias-based beliefs in disproportionality. *Theory into Practice*, 56(3), 169–177.

References

- Ferlazzo, L. (2017, July 6). Author interview: ‘Culturally sustaining pedagogies’ (blog). *Education Week*. Retrieved September 28, 2021, from <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-author-interview-culturally-sustaining-pedagogies/2017/07>
- Garmston, R. J., & Wellman, B. M. (2016). *The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Goodman, D. (2011). *Promoting diversity and social justice: Educating people from privileged groups*. New York: Routledge.
- Hamond, Z. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Corwin.
- Hardy, K. V. (2013). Healing the hidden wounds of racial trauma. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 22(1), 24.

References

- Harrison, C., & Tanner, K. D. (2018). Language matters: Considering microaggressions in science. *CBE: Life Sciences Education*, 17, fe4, 1–8.
- Hidalgo, N. (1993). Multicultural teacher introspection. In T. Perry & J. Fraser (Eds.), *Freedom's plow: Teaching in the multicultural classroom*. New York: Routledge.
- Khalifa, M. A., Gooden, M. A., & Davis, J. E. (2016). Culturally responsive school leadership. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(4), 1272–1311.
doi:10.3102/0034654316630383
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014, Spring). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 74–84.
- Nadal, K. L. (2014). A guide to responding to microaggressions. *CUNY Forum*, 2(1), 71–76.

References

- Nishizuka, K. (2018). Exploring the developmental process and internal structure of Kizuki-based volunteer activities for sustainable organizations: A case study of HARU. *Journal of Disaster Research*, 13, 1309–1322. 10.20965/jdr.2018.p1309.
- Price-Dennis, D., Muhammad, G. E., Womack, E., McArthur, S. A., & Haddix, M. (2017). The multiple identities and literacies of Black girlhood: A conversation about creating spaces for Black girl voices. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 13(2), 1–18.
- Roegman, R., Allen, D., Leverett, L., Thompson, S., & Hatch, T. (2019). *Equity visits: A new approach to supporting equity-focused school and district leadership*. Corwin.
- The BELE Framework: An Approach to Building Equitable Learning Environments*. (n.d.). Retrieved October 19, 2020, from <https://belenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/The-BELE-Framework.pdf>
- Theoharis, G. (2010). Disrupting injustice: Principals narrate the strategies they use to improve their schools and advance social justice. *Teachers College Record*, 112(1), 331–373.
- Valencia, R. R. (1997). *The evolution of deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice*. Oxford, UK: RoutledgeFalmer.