

# Identifying and Transforming Educational Inequities

*What might we need to know and do to interrupt implicit bias and microaggressions in an educational setting?*

Dr. Gregory Peters, SF-CESS  
Dr. Leora Wolf-Prusan, WestEd

# Overview of the two part series

## Part 1- Today!

- **Opening Moves** – Introduction, Community Building
- **Focused Work**
  - Calibrating Context and Language: School Climate, Implicit Bias and Microaggressions
  - A Framework for Transformation
    - » Stage I: Stance and Schema Awareness
    - » Stage II: Interruptive and Catalytic Experiences
- **Closing Moves** – Reflections and Looking Forward

## Part 2 – October 26

- **Opening Moves** – Review, Community Builder
- **Focused Work**
  - A Framework for Transformation, Continued
    - » Stage III: New Meaning Making
    - » Stage IV: Bold Action/ Radical Change
- **Open Space** – Q and A
- **Closing Moves** – Implications, Commitments, Evaluations

# Part 1

## *Moving into awareness and interruption*



“If we want to grow as teachers, we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives - risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract.”

— Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*

# Objectives: We will...



Deepen our understanding of **implicit bias and micro-aggressions**, and how they relate to school climate & culture

Begin to **engage in inquiry** – individually and collectively about the role bias and micro-aggressions play in our lives in “the skin we are in” and across our professional relationships (colleagues, staff, students, faculty, admin, etc.)

# What brings us to this conversation (in the skin we are in)?

*In 1779, Thomas Jefferson proposes a two-track educational system, with different tracks in his words for "the laboring and the learned." Scholarship would allow a very few of the laboring class to advance, Jefferson says, by "raking a few geniuses from the rubbish."*

- **Historically**, the very design of public education intend to serve some better or worse than others.
- **Professionally**, we espouse a commitment to equitable outcomes for every student regardless of demographic predictors.
- **Personally**, our own formative experiences – in the skin we are in – inform our work and relate results. Our own includes those as students (invisible), teacher (throw-away kids) and leaders (ally-activist).

***What brings you to this conversation – in the skin you are in?***

# Opening Chat: As you look at this image...

*What do you think?*

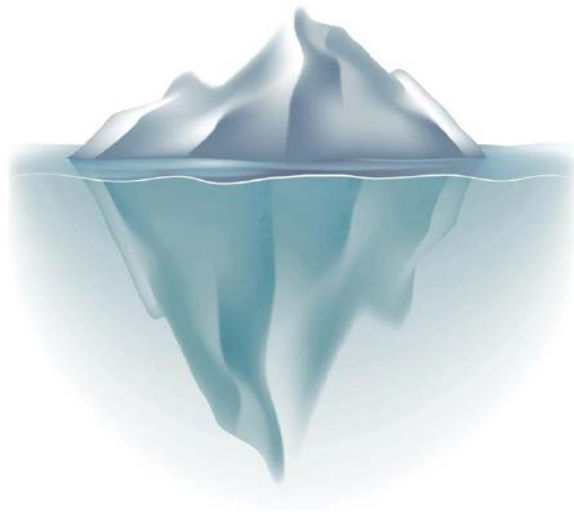
*What do you feel?*



*Elementary Student Depiction of School; Source: Linda Christensen*



# What is [School] Climate/Culture?

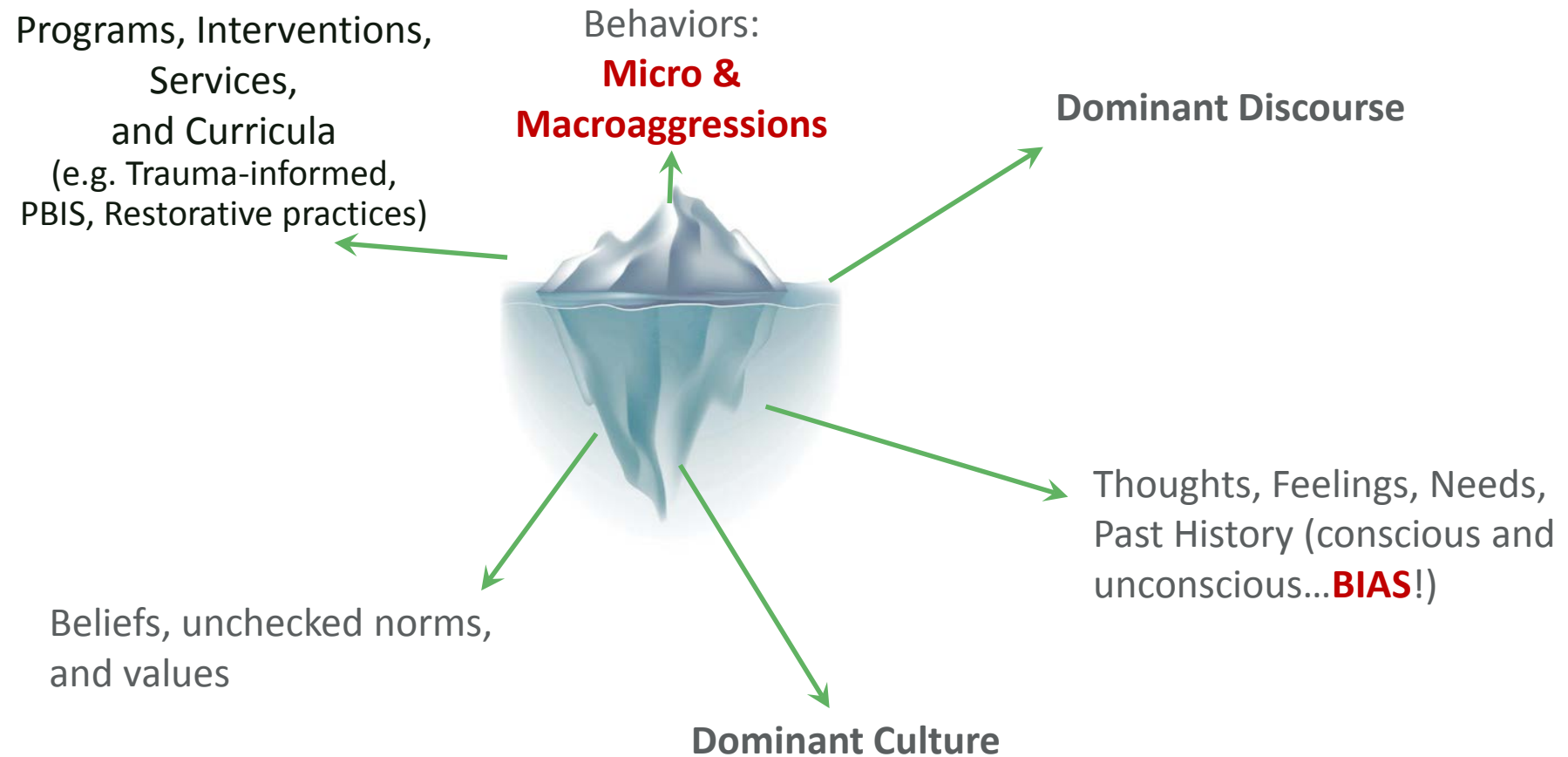


Programs,  
Interventions,  
Services, and Curricula

Beliefs, Norms and  
Values



# How does the under influence the over?



## Implicit Bias:

The attitudes and stereotypes that unconsciously affect people's perceptions, actions, and decisions

(Kirwan Institute for Race and Ethnicity).

- **Disproportionality in discipline:** Policies that appear racially neutral on their face, but result in the over-representation of students of color - particularly black boys -- in suspensions, expulsions, and referrals for subjective infractions like "defiance."
- **Disproportionality in special education:** Misguided placements that result in the over-representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education programs.
- **Educator mindsets and beliefs:** Underestimating the intellectual capacity of culturally and linguistically diverse students, and often girls, inside the classroom.
- **Tracking:** School policies that automatically place students of color in remedial or low-track courses.
- ***Dominant discourse:*** *Ways of thinking and talking about students and families that diminish, underestimate, or even pathologize them (also referred to as deficit based).*

# Micro for whom? *Microaggressions*

“Brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, **whether intentional or unintentional**, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults towards people of marginalized groups.”

- Perpetrators often unaware of such communications with people of marginalized groups
- Cut across all social identities
- Intention does not always equal IMPACT

# Microaggressions: Three ways of surfacing

## Micro-assault (~conscious)

- Explicit identity-based derogations characterized primarily by a violent verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions.

## Micro-invalidatation (~unconscious)

- Actions that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of people who represent different groups.

## Micro-insult (~unconscious)

- Behaviors, actions, or verbal remarks that convey rudeness, insensitivity, or demean a person's group or social identity or heritage.

Interpersonal and Environmental

How do we interrupt beliefs, practices  
and experiences that are harming our  
students, staff, schools and systems?

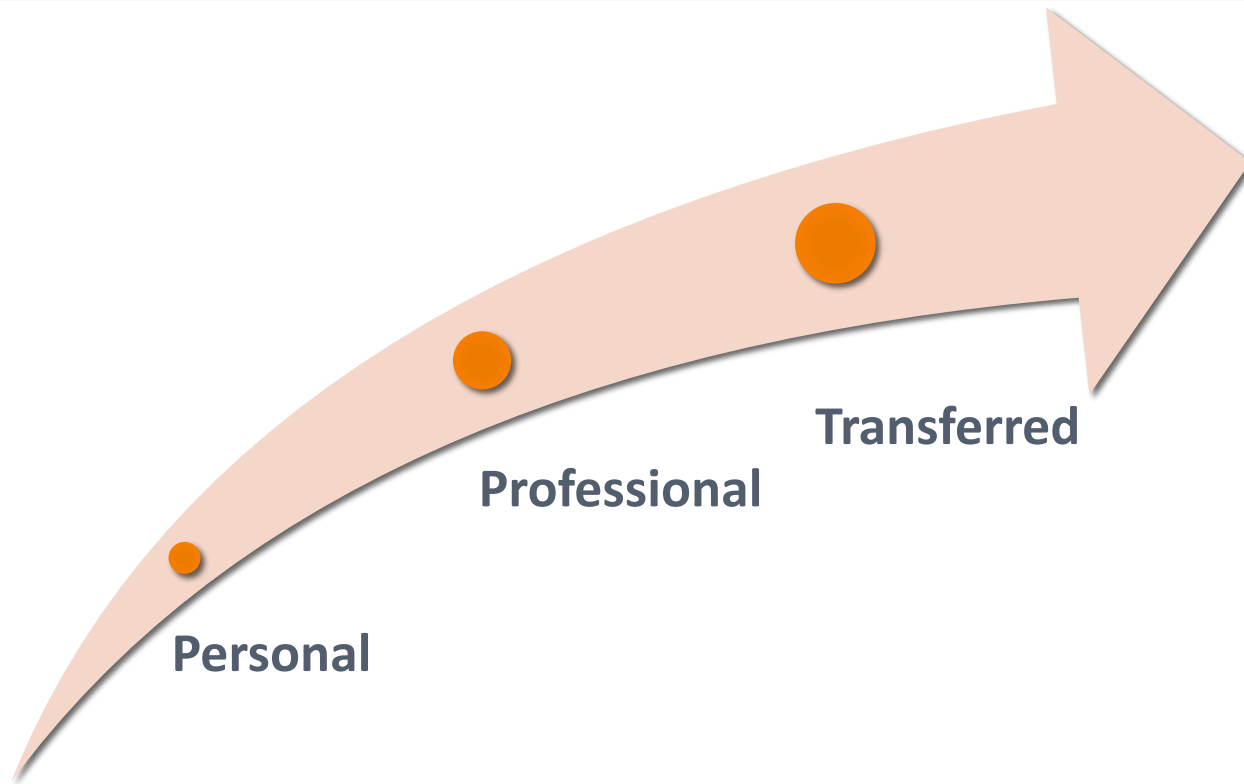
*Transformational leadership*

# On Transformation

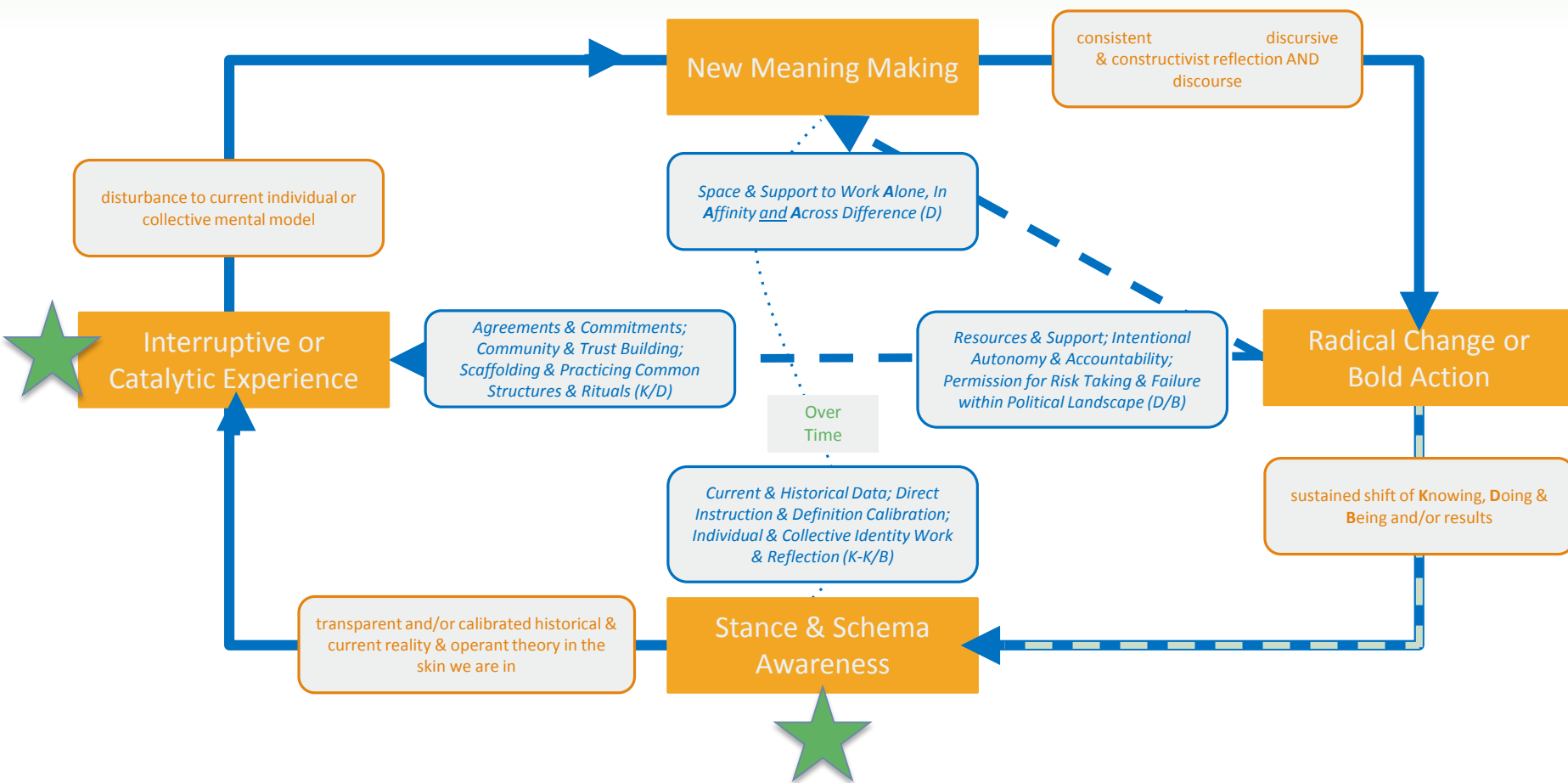
*“If there is anything that we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves.” - Carl Jung*

# Theory of Transformation At Its Simplest

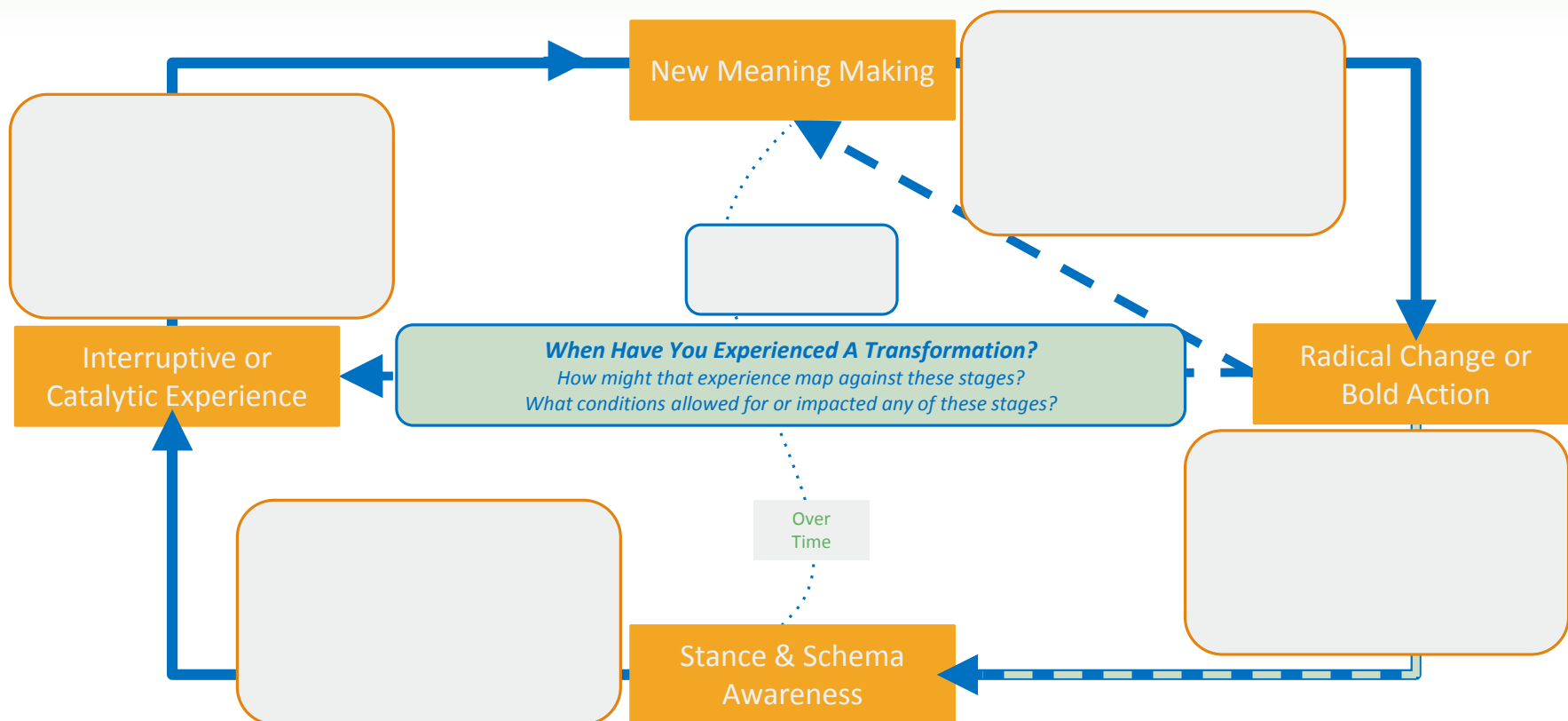
## *Inside-Out Work*



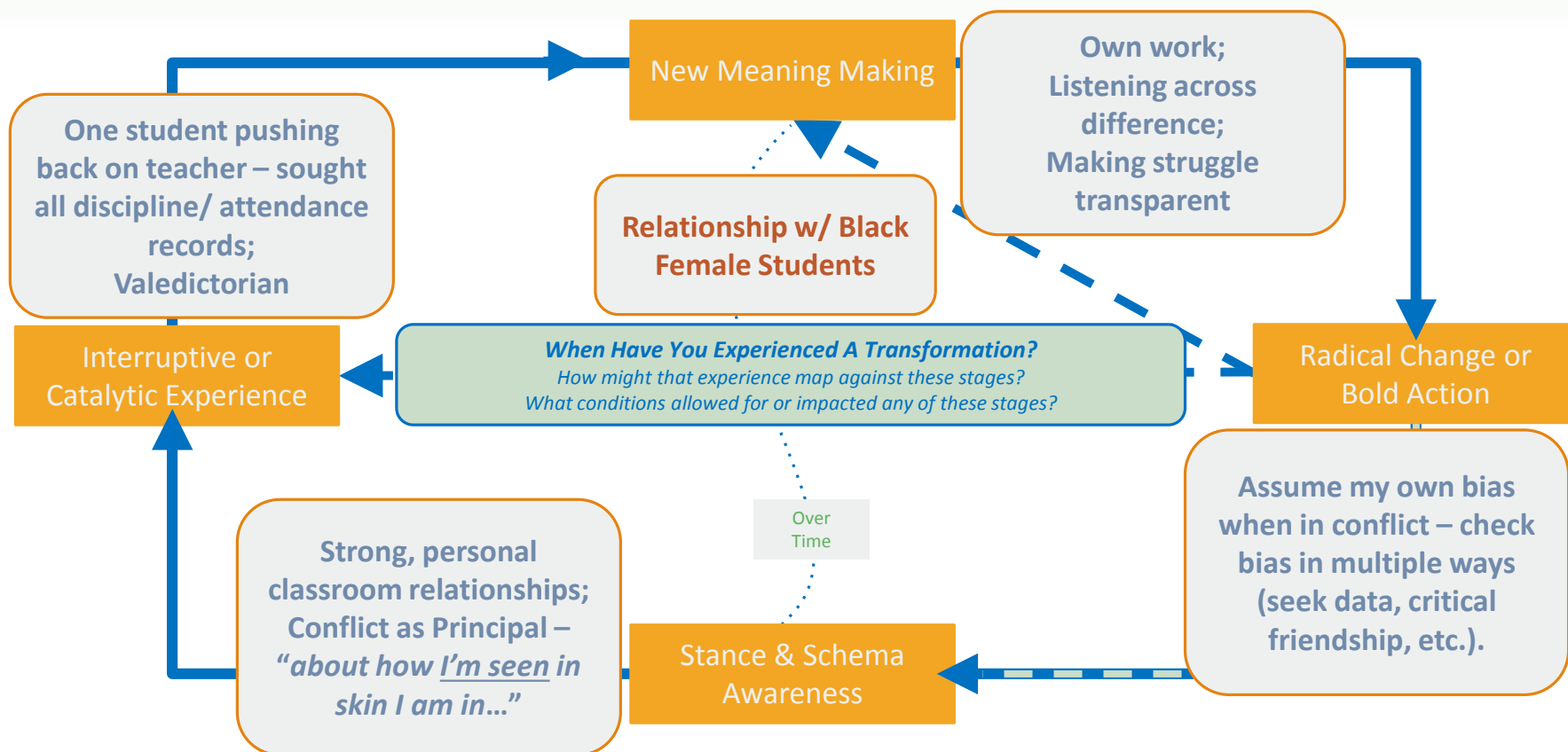




# A Conceptual Framework for Transformation



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# A Conceptual Framework for Transformation

# Stages of Transformation with Reflective Questions for Leaders

## **1. Stance and Schema Awareness:** *Identity work about our individual and shared history*

- When in your life has your own awareness or unawareness of yourself, in the skin you are in, been keenly influential to you and/or your work?

## **2. Conditions for Interrupting Inequities:** *Developing Community as well as shared agreements and practices*

- When have you faced an interruption in your schema-to the way you viewed the world and your relationship to it? What allowed for that to happen?

## **3. Making New Meanings:** *Working Alone, In Affinity and Across Difference*

- When do you study-intentionally, on your own, in affinity or with allies to help make new meaning of the world and your relationship to it?

## **4. Radical Change/ Bold Actions:** *Fostering conditions and relationships to shift practice and results*

- What radical new action have you ever taken because of a transformation you have experienced?

# Stance & Schema Awareness: The Skin We Are In - Student Perspective

*"I actually think that is true, that teachers are taught to base... to judge students when they first see them... Let's say they're Black or something... Some teachers will kind of be with a cautious approach... watching them and how they act, or some teachers will just judge them and just separate them or something."*



- High School Senior

# Stance & Schema Awareness: Identity and Cultural Competency

**Constant & Continuous  
Awareness & Knowledge  
Self, System, & Others**



**Operant Theory – Study...**

- Identity - Individual & Systemic
- History – Cumulative & Formative

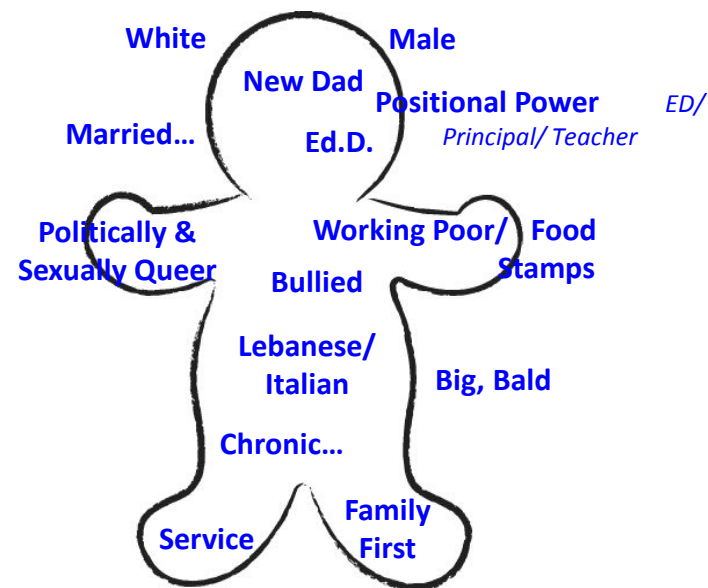
**Current Reality – Interrogate...**

- Quantitative and qualitative Data
  - regularly & publicly
- School Design and Decisions: *Who does and does not benefit?*

# Stance & Schema Awareness: The Skin We Are In

1. *If “the skin you are in” represents characteristics and experiences that influence who and how you show up each day, then how do you describe “the skin you are in”?*
2. *How might others - especially the students in your care - describe the skin you are in?*
3. ***How do your own experiences, consciously or unconsciously, influence your actions with students like – and unlike – you?***

*The skin I am in: My formative experiences and identities*





## Stage 1 Closing Reflection

*When in your life has your own awareness or unawareness of yourself, in the skin you are in, been keenly influential to you and/or your work?*

# Stages of Transformation with Reflective Questions for Leaders

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# Interruptive & Catalytic Experiences: Disrupting Our Mental Models

## A Different Discourse Is Needed



*“Good words will not give my people good health and stop them from dying. Good words will not get my people a home where they can live in peace and take care of themselves. I am tired of talk that comes to nothing. It makes my heart sick when I remember all the good words and broken promises.” - Chief Joseph*

# Interruptive & Catalytic Experiences: Disrupting Our Mental Models

## Personal & Organizational Commitment – Develop...

- Shared Buy-In/ Community Norms or Agreements
- Calibrated Expectations of Necessary Work

## Equity-Centered Structures & Strategies – Engage Regularly In...

- Deep Community & Trust Building
- Equity-Centered Rituals & Protocols (PLCs)
- Calibrating Language (i.e. Accountability, Equity, Success) as well as **discourse focused on being in D2**
- Sharing Stories About Difference & Shared Struggles
- Constant & Continuous Cycles of Work

# A Different Discourse Is Needed

## DISCOURSE I

The language **typically used** to talk about, question and plan the work of schools, change or reform.

Discourse I dialogue **supports and maintains the status quo without appearing unresponsive** to outside demands for improvement.

## DISCOURSE II

The language that tends to be about **uncomfortable, unequal, ineffective, prejudicial conditions and relationships** in schools.

Discourse II opens up space for **ambiguity and change** to be parts of a **purposeful structure**.

# A Different Discourse Is Needed: T-Chart

Discourse I	Discourse II
deals with... The Work of Adults	deals with... The Learning and Experiences of Students
and sounds like... <i>"We can't expect every teacher to know every student's culture."</i>	and sounds like... <i>"What do our LGBTQ students have to say about how they are experiencing school... and us?"</i>
Discourse I deals with... Systemic and Social Reproduction (Hegemony)	Discourse II deals with... Interruption AND Transformation
and sounds like... <i>"Look at the parent(s); the apple does not fall far from the tree."</i>	and sounds like... <i>"When a student gets an 'F', who failed what? Who failed whom?"</i>
Discourse I deals with... How Adults Talk About Student Learning Experiences	Discourse II deals with... How Students Talk About Student Learning Experiences
and sounds like... <i>"One student should not stop other students from learning."</i>	and sounds like... <i>"Only the black kids get kicked out of her class – because we're loud. But that is because we never get help and are bored so we play around."</i>

# Interruptive & Catalytic Experiences: Disrupting Our Mental Models

## ON COMMUNITY NORMS

- Be On Time → **Stay Engaged**
- Be Respectful → **Experience Discomfort**
- Step Up/ Step Back → **Pay Attention to Patterns of Participation**
- Assume Best Intentions → **Speak Your Truth**

## REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

- **What are your community's explicit norms and how do they compare to your implicit or unspoken norms?**
- To what extent to these norms encourage and foster interruption?
- Whose cultural norms are most prominent in your community – who do they serve best? Least?



## Stage 2 Closing Reflection

*When have you faced an interruption in your schema-to the way you viewed the world and your relationship to it?*

*What allowed for that to happen?*

# Part 1 Closing

- 3: Ideas or commitments that excite you...
- 2: Questions you are sitting with...
- 1: Piece you are looking forward to for next session...

# Looking Ahead: Integrating the Work

## *Questions to bring back to practice*

1. What challenges come to mind when thinking about your perspective and approach to interrupting dominant discourse?
2. What challenges come to mind when thinking about your colleagues' perspectives and approaches to interrupting dominant discourse?
3. What might be some strategies to speak to areas of challenge?
4. How might you create meaningful opportunities for ensuring a school-culture/climate that values engaging in these hard conversations?
5. What are you already doing to cultivate a climate of discourse disruption, and what else can we do?
6. What we need more help with or have questions about?

# Looking Forward To Our Next Session

Making New Meaning



Radical Change or Bold Action



# Resources

- <https://www.weareteachers.com/things-every-teacher-know-classroom-microaggressions>
- [http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/olweus\\_program\\_materials.page](http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/olweus_program_materials.page) (Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Materials for Educators)
- <https://psychologybenefits.org/2013/07/31/is-it-you-or-is-it-racist-the-insidious-impact-of-microaggressions-on-mental-health>
- <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/microaggressions-matter/406090>
- <http://www.microaggressions.com/>
- <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/keys-to-challenging-implicit-bias-shane-safir>

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Thank you!



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