

Mindsets and Achievement: Overcoming the Achievement Gap Trap

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Workshop Disclaimer – Warning 😊

- We will examine personal, social, and professional mindsets and the workshop material is designed to be provocative and force discomfort and cognitive dissonance
- This workshop will be difficult for people who are “offensive” (overly sensitive and easily offended)

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Public School Purpose

- ◎ All children have the **right** to have their gifts and talents cultivated through the process of education.
- ◎ All children **can** learn and become educated.

(Cuban & Tyack, 1995)

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What Has History Taught Us?

All students have not benefited equally from access to educational institutions?

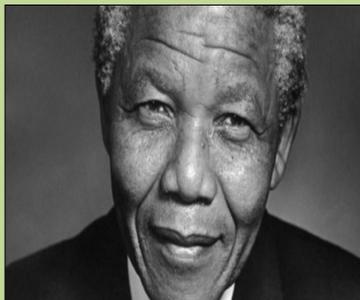
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The Achievement Gap

Achievement gap refers to the observed and persistent disparity on a number of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by **gender, race/ethnicity, language, disability, and socioeconomic status**. The achievement gap can be observed on a variety of measures, including standardized test scores, grade point average, dropout rates, and college enrollment and completion rates.

(The Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University,
<http://www.agi.harvard.edu/projects/thegap.php>)

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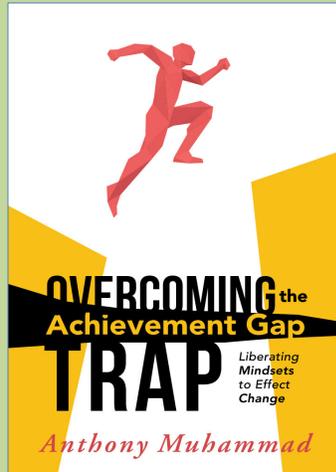


“The world’s problems begin with the belief that some human lives are more valuable than others.”

—Nelson Mandela

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The Problem



“Our society tends to embrace the idea of equality as dogma, but society has not embraced the idea of equity in service and environment in order to achieve the equality that we claim that we desire. This is a problem.”

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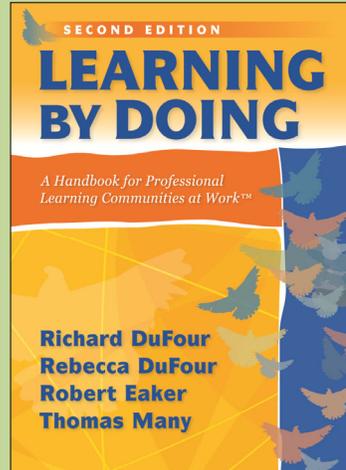
Pause to Think!

- Who are your underrepresented achievement groups?
- Is there a sense of urgency to address their needs?

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Call to Arms

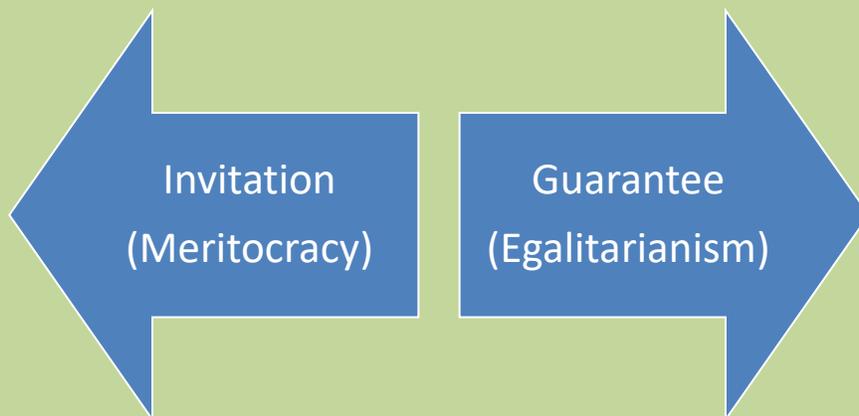
“When a school or district functions as a PLC, educators within the organization embrace high levels of learning for ALL students as both the reason the organization exists and the fundamental responsibility of those who work within it.”



—DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work* (2010)

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A Major Shift in Paradigm



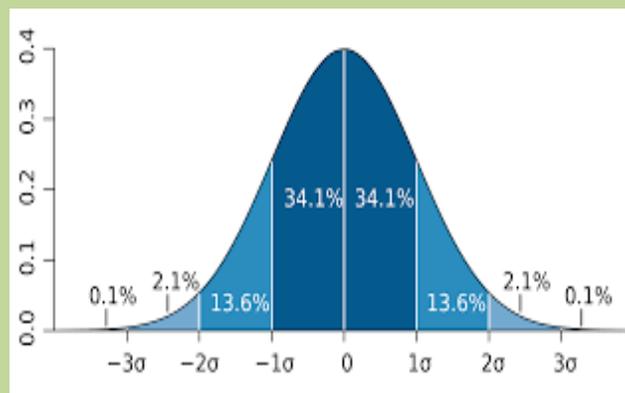
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Meritocracy

A system in which the talented are **chosen** and **moved** ahead on the basis of their achievement

—Merriam-Webster Dictionary

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Meritocracy Is the Foundation for ...

- Grading practices
- Academic tracking
- Norm referenced testing
- School accountability ratings
- Merit pay and evaluation

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Meritocracy Makes Sense in ...

- Sales
- Commerce
- Athletics
- Talent competitions

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Toxic School Culture (Meritocracy)

“Educators believe that student success is based on students’ level of concern, attentiveness, prior knowledge, and willingness to comply with the demands of the school, and they articulate that belief in overt and covert ways. Educators create policies and procedures and adopt practices that support their belief in the impossibility of universal achievement.”

—Peterson in Cromwell, “Is Your School Culture Toxic or Positive?” *Education World* (2002)

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Pause to Think

- Analyze your policy and procedure documents and complete the Meritocracy Inventory
- Do you anticipate other staff members protesting the deconstruction of some of these policies? If so, what might they argue?
- Share your insights with a neighbor

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Egalitarianism

- 1:** a belief in human equality especially with respect to social, political, and economic affairs
- 2:** a social philosophy advocating the removal of inequalities among people

—*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

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"Excellence in education is when we do everything that we can to make sure they become everything that they can."

—Carol Ann
Tomlinson

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Criterion Reference

vs.

Norm Reference

Criterion-referenced tests and [assessments](#) are designed to measure student performance against a fixed set of predetermined criteria or [learning standards](#)—i.e., concise, written descriptions of what students are expected to know and be able to do at a specific stage of their education.

The Glossary of Educational Reform
<https://www.edglossary.org/criterion-referenced-test/>

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Gifted-and-Talented Education

“Gifted-and-talented education works for two reasons: the student believes that he is gifted and the teacher believes that he is gifted.

“Based on this agreement, the teacher and student create the right learning environment and they utilize rigorous learning activities. All human beings possess a gift; the key is to identify and capitalize on it.”

—**Renzulli**, “What Makes Giftedness? Reexamining a Definition,” *Phi Beta Kappan* (2011)

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4. Regardless of aptitude, every kid deserves to be treated as though they were gifted.

The study's focus is specifically on kids within a certain range of intellectual ability, but Lubinski is careful to note that many of its findings can and should be applied to all students.

For example, the kids in the study who were given an opportunity to take more challenging courses that aligned with their skills and interests ultimately went on to accomplish more than the students who were not afforded the same opportunity.

(2013) Benbow, Kell, and Lubinski, Who Rises to the Top?, *Psychological Science*, 24(5)

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Healthy School Culture (Egalitarian)

“Educators have an unwavering belief in the ability of all of their students to achieve success, and they pass that belief on to others in overt and covert ways. Educators create policies and procedures and adopt practices that support their belief in the ability of every student.”

—Peterson in Cromwell, “Is Your School Culture Toxic or Positive?” *Education World* (2002)

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Pause to Think

- Analyze your policy and practice documents and complete the Egalitarian Inventory
- Do some staff members at your school oppose these policies? What are some of their arguments?
- Share your insights with a neighbor

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Learning Activities?

An analysis of research conducted over a 35-year period demonstrates that schools that are highly effective produce results that almost entirely overcome the effects of student backgrounds.

(Marzano, *What Works in Schools: Translating Research Into Action*, 2003)

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The Achievement Gap Is a Product of Our Thinking!



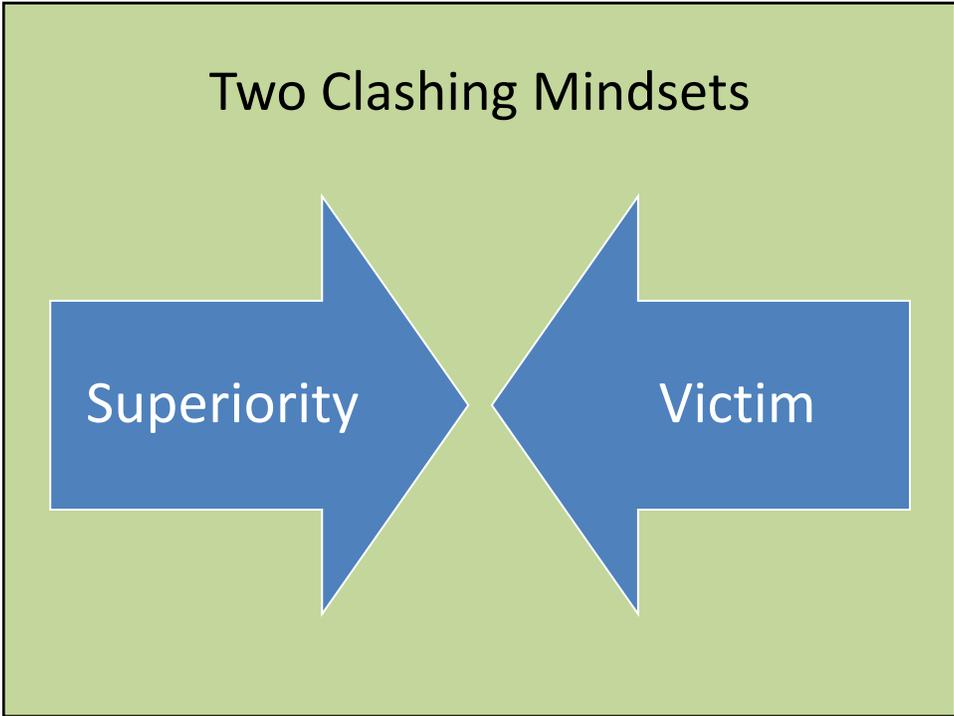
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Mindset

The established set of attitudes held
by someone

—*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

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Superiority Mindset

The book cover features a red silhouette of a person jumping over a yellow and black barrier. The text on the cover reads: 'OVERCOMING the Achievement Gap TRAP' with 'Liberating Mindsets to Effect Change' in smaller text below. The author's name, 'Anthony Muhammad', is at the bottom.

“I contend that the time, scholarship, effort, and resources to address the achievement gap were doomed to fail from their inception because there are people who have a vested interest in being defined as superior to others and they will seek to protect it. I call this the superiority mindset.”

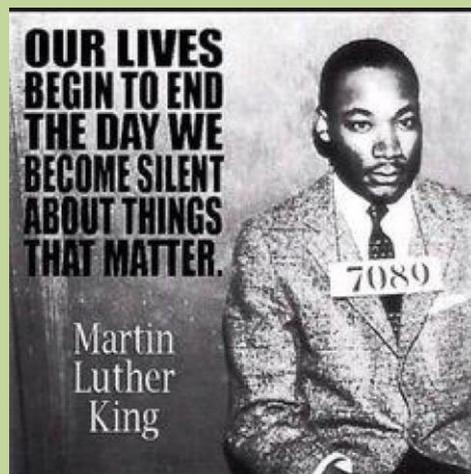
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Components of the Superiority Mindset

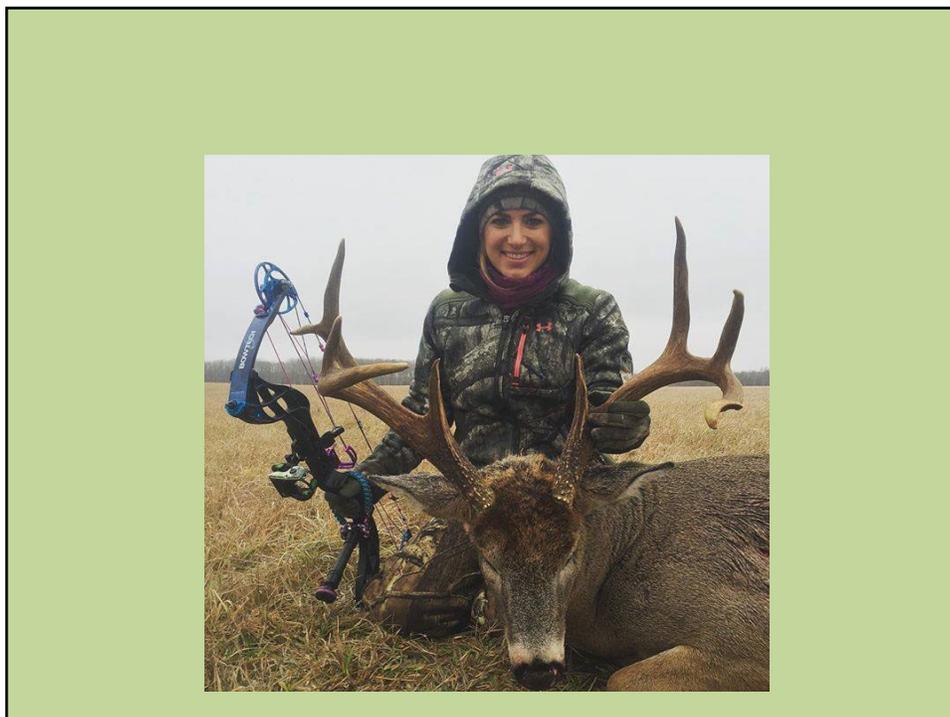
- **Paternalism** – The need to feel superior to regular human folly
- **Competition** – Personal and group value is based on the ability to be better than others.
- **Standard Bearing** – The belief that my construct is the best and only construct, and I define myself and others through that lens

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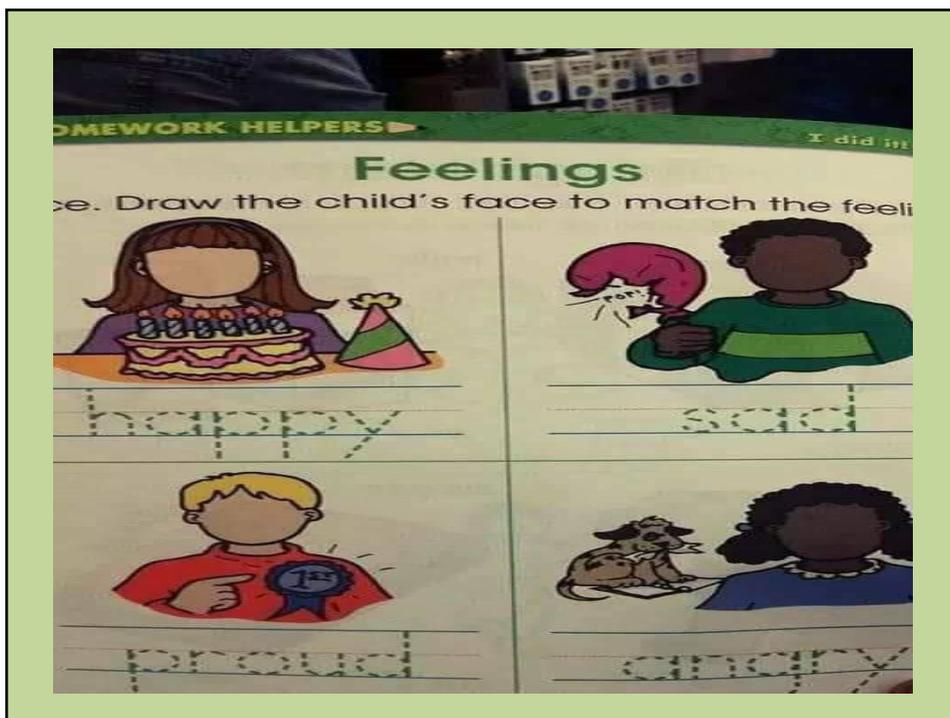
Does Inequality Bother You?



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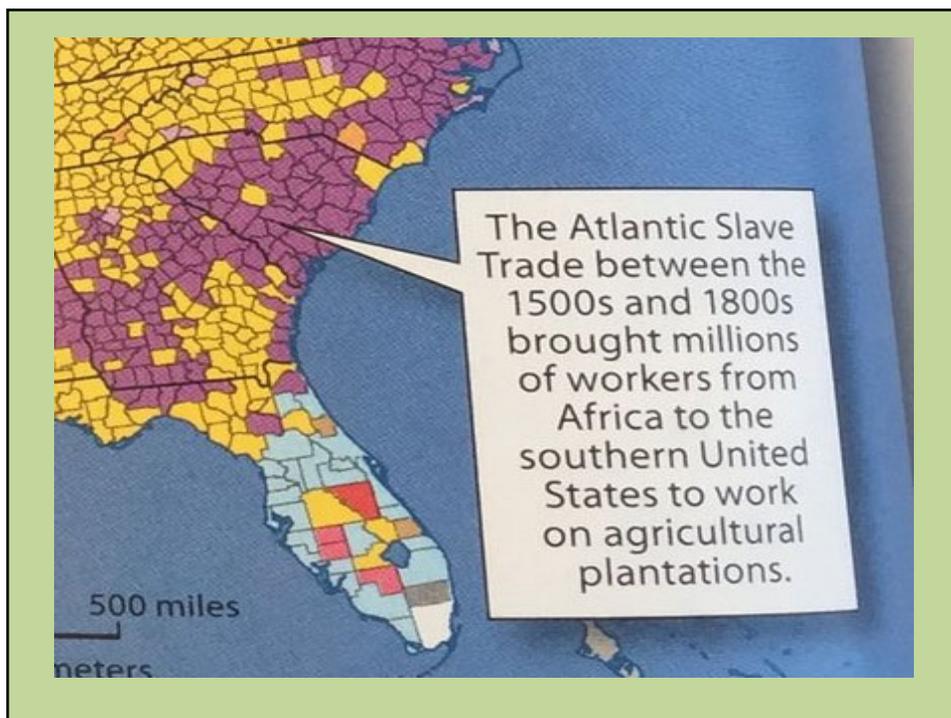
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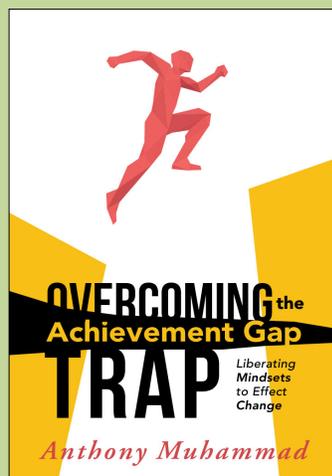
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Pause to Think!

- How did these photos make you feel?
- Did you find yourself angry or offended? Did you find yourself unaffected?
- Rank these photos in order of their level of offensiveness from most offensive to least offensive?

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Victim Mindset



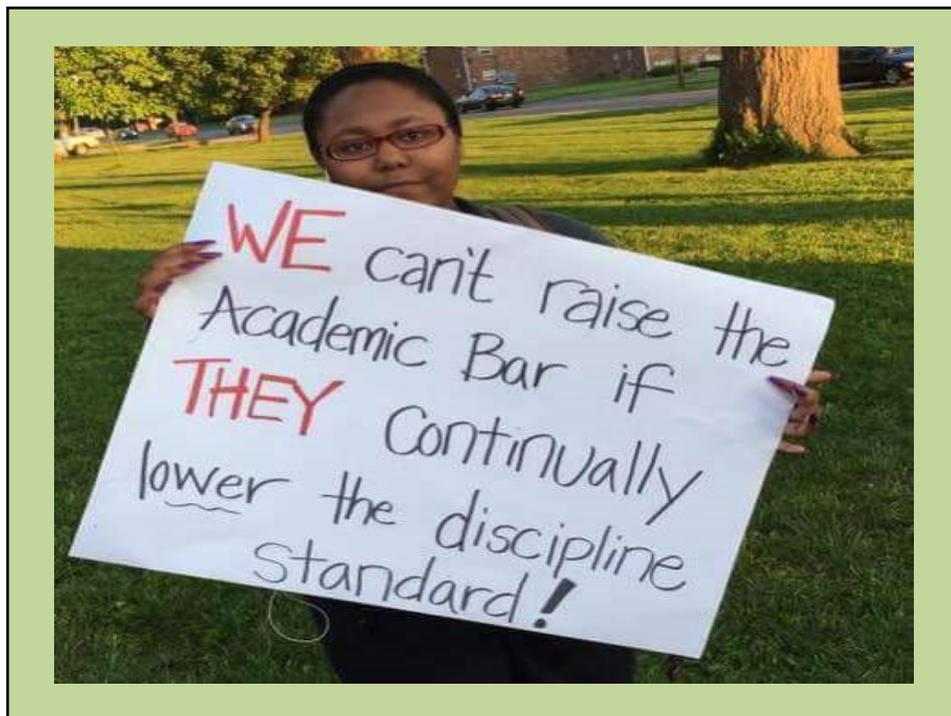
“Individual and collective responsibility to change conditions is difficult. There is a sense of comfort that comes from framing others as predators and oneself as a victim. I call this the victim mindset.”

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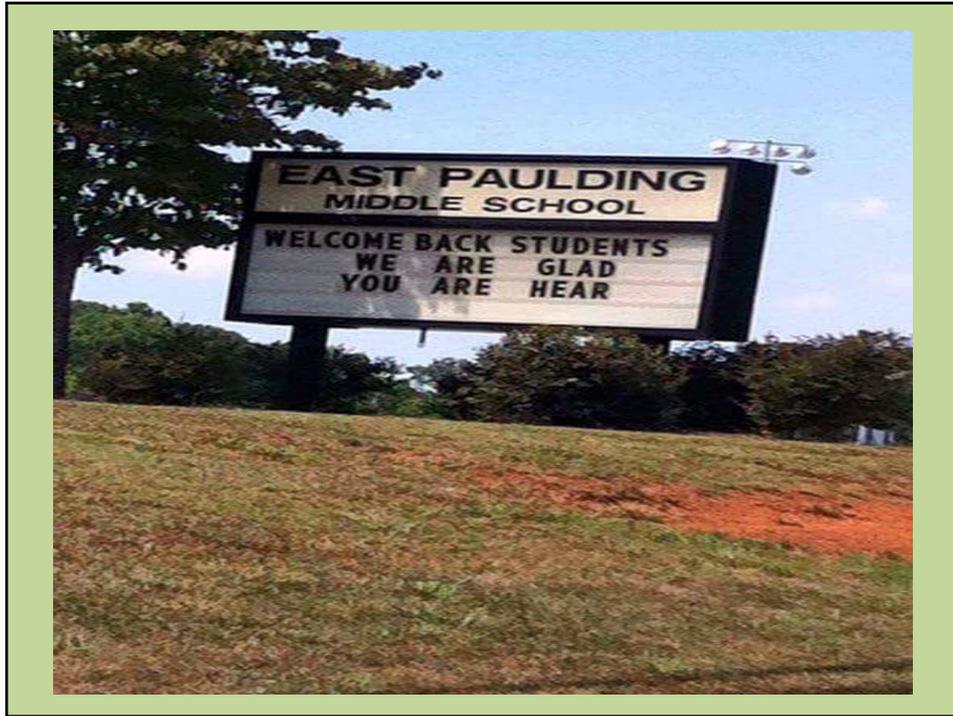
Components of the Victim Mindset

- Irresponsibility
- Low motivation
- Low expectations

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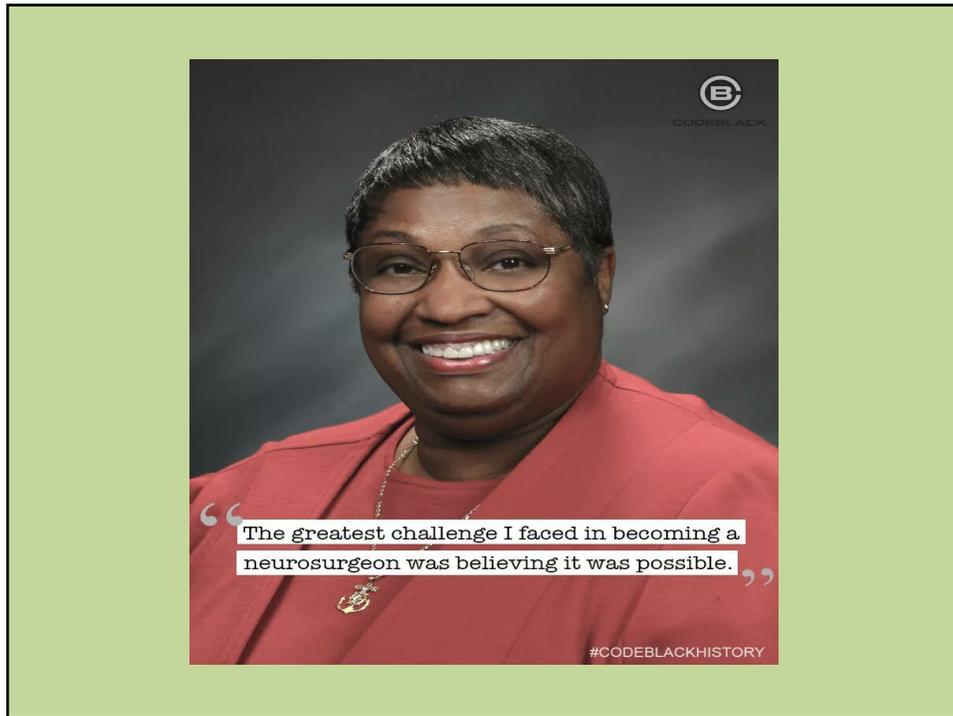
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*In one school year
a child spends:
7800 hours at home
&
900 hours at school
which teacher should be
the most accountable?*

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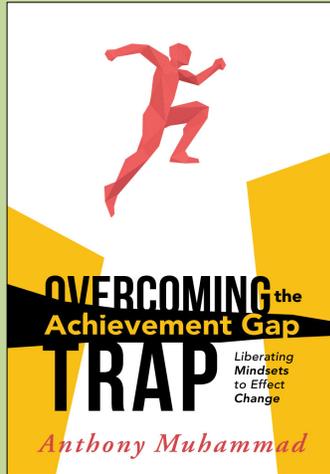
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Liberation Mindset



“The liberation mindset is an unwavering set of collective beliefs and actions rooted in the goal of achieving high levels of academic and social success for all students despite internal or external barrier.”

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Three Components

- Equality
- Responsibility
- Advocacy

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Equality

The belief that human potential is not a function of personal characteristics such as race, gender, economic status, home language, national origin, or disability

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Case Study: Seneca High School

- Reaffirming purpose
- Changing language
- Changing structures
- Changing expectations

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Responsibility

The belief that we will hold ourselves accountable for nurturing each student to his or her potential and to teach responsibility and self-empowerment to our students. We will accept the responsibility to develop our professional knowledge, practice, and systems to be responsive to the needs of our student population.

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Case Study: Kendrick Middle School

- Used data to analyze problem
- Organized resources to attack problem by creating systems to mentor and build grit
- Used responsiveness instead of assimilation

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Advocacy

The belief that people and entities outside of school must play an active and supportive role in developing our students. We will hold others accountable for supporting our efforts to properly educate our students through active participation, financial support, positive publicity, providing experiences, and legislation.

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Case Study: MLK Elementary

- Declared war on complaining
- Principal created a movement that focused on what they and others could do to positively impact the school
- Included school, district, and community in an ambitious plan of improvement

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Rubric

- Assess your school's current reality for Equality, Responsibility, and Advocacy using the rubric
- Brainstorm concrete strategies that you plan to implement using the Action Plan

Equity Inventory

	White	AA	Latino	NA	Asian	ED	SWD	Male	Female	EL
Reading Proficiency										
Math Proficiency										
% Enrolled in GT courses										
% on honor roll										
% Graduating in 4 years										
% enrolled in remedial courses										
% suspended at least 1 day										
% truant										
% with an IEP										

1. What does your data profile tell you about equity in your school?

2. What are your most disturbing areas of inequality? Why?

3. Hypothesize about why these gaps exist.

Meritocracy Inventory

1. Review your master schedule/academic program and identify meritocratic policies/structures.
2. Review your staff and student handbooks, and student code of conduct and identify blatant and subtle forms of meritocracy.
3. What student groups are affected most by these policies/structures? Can you connect any of these policies/practices to the gaps found in the Equity Inventory?

Egalitarian Inventory

1. Review your master schedule/academic program and identify egalitarian policies/structures.
2. Review your staff and student handbooks, and student code of conduct and identify egalitarian policies or paradigms.
3. What student groups typically benefit most from these policies/structures? Can you connect any of these policies/practices to improvement or growth in your data?