



WestEd   
Western Educational  
Equity Assistance Center

# Foundations of Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Education

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WEEAC Webinar #2



# Technical Assistance

# Professional Learning

- By request—school boards, governmental agencies
- Through equity-centered capacity-building to better serve students who have experienced ongoing inequities in our educational system because of race, national origin, sex, or religion

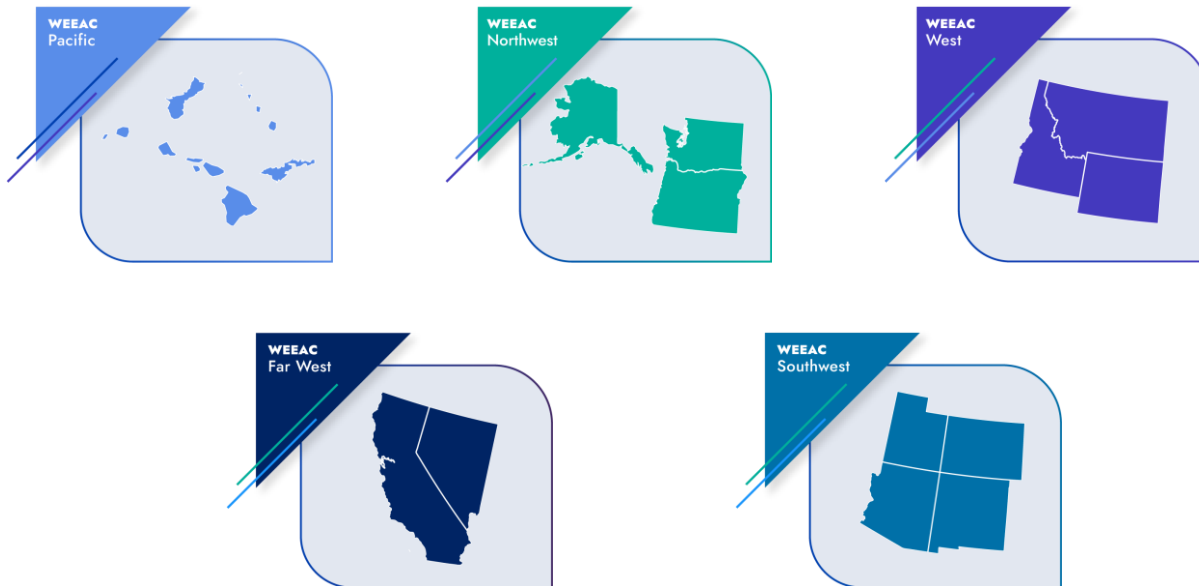


# Western Educational Equity Assistance Center (WEEAC) Objectives

- Reduce chronic absence.
- Reduce bullying and harassment.
- Improve high school graduation rates.
- Strengthen high school course enrollment.
- Improve discipline equity.
- Address disproportionality of students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Address discrimination cases and desegregation orders.



# WEEAC Sub-Regions



## Pacific

American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and Hawai'i

## Northwest

Alaska, Oregon, and Washington

## West

Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming

## Far West

California and Nevada

## Southwest

Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah



# Five-Part Webinar Series

- [Webinar 1 Pt.1](#) – Beyond Diversity: Achieving Racial Equity by Addressing Systemic Beliefs  
Wednesday, November 1
- [Webinar 1 Pt.2](#) – Beyond Diversity: Achieving Racial Equity by Addressing Systemic Beliefs  
Wednesday, November 15
- **[Webinar 2](#) – Foundations of Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Education**  
**Thursday, January 18**
- [Webinar 3](#) – Culturally Responsive Data Literacy  
Thursday, February 22
- [Webinar 4](#) – From Awareness to Action: Equity Detours & the Equity Literacy Framework  
Thursday, March 21
- [Webinar 5](#) – Family and Community Engagement  
Thursday, April 25



# Expertise of the WEEAC Team



Rawlin J. Rosario  
Senior Program Associate



Jackie Peng  
Program Associate



# Objectives

- Deepen understanding of how and where culture exists in our schools, classrooms, and shared spaces.
- Explore the qualities of an equitable classroom and the central role of noticing and self-reflection in the implementation of culturally responsive and sustaining practices.
- Examine practices, policies, and conditions that hinder student belonging and inhibit the academic success and social well-being of diverse students.
- Explore how becoming a culturally responsive educator is foundational to addressing educational inequities, resulting in the disproportionate outcomes and negative experiences of historically marginalized students.

# Session Agenda



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- Welcome and Introductions
- Setting the Stage
- Culture in Schools
- Examining Culture at a Systems Level
- Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CRSE)
- Closing and Survey





# Grounding Activity

What is a cultural tradition or practice that makes you feel welcome when you enter a space?

- Take 2 minutes to think it over
- Share your responses via Menti

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Mentimeter

## Instructions

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# Setting the Stage to Discuss Culture and Bias



# The Window Through Which We Look

A young couple moved into a new neighborhood. The next morning while they were eating breakfast, the young woman saw her neighbor hanging the wash outside.

“That laundry is not very clean,” she said. “She doesn’t know how to wash correctly. Perhaps she needs better laundry soap.”

Her husband looked on but remained silent.

Every time her neighbor would hang her wash to dry, the young woman would make the same comments.

About one month later, the woman was surprised to see a nice clean wash on the line and said to her husband, “Look, she has learned how to wash correctly. I wonder who taught her this?”

The husband said, “I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows.”



# Our Starting Point

- Equal educational opportunities are a civil right.
- Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education (CRSE) and equity are the plate.
- Refocus our gaze: We need to fix systems and adult practices, *NOT children and families/communities.*
- *This is a journey, not a destination.*

# Working Agreements



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Expect and accept nonclosure

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Notice patterns of power by interrogating self  
and systems

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Focus on impact rather than intent

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Stay engaged even when uncomfortable

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Keep confidentiality

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Grant permission for collective breath



Which working  
agreement(s)  
can you commit  
to uphold in this  
session?

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# Culture in Schools

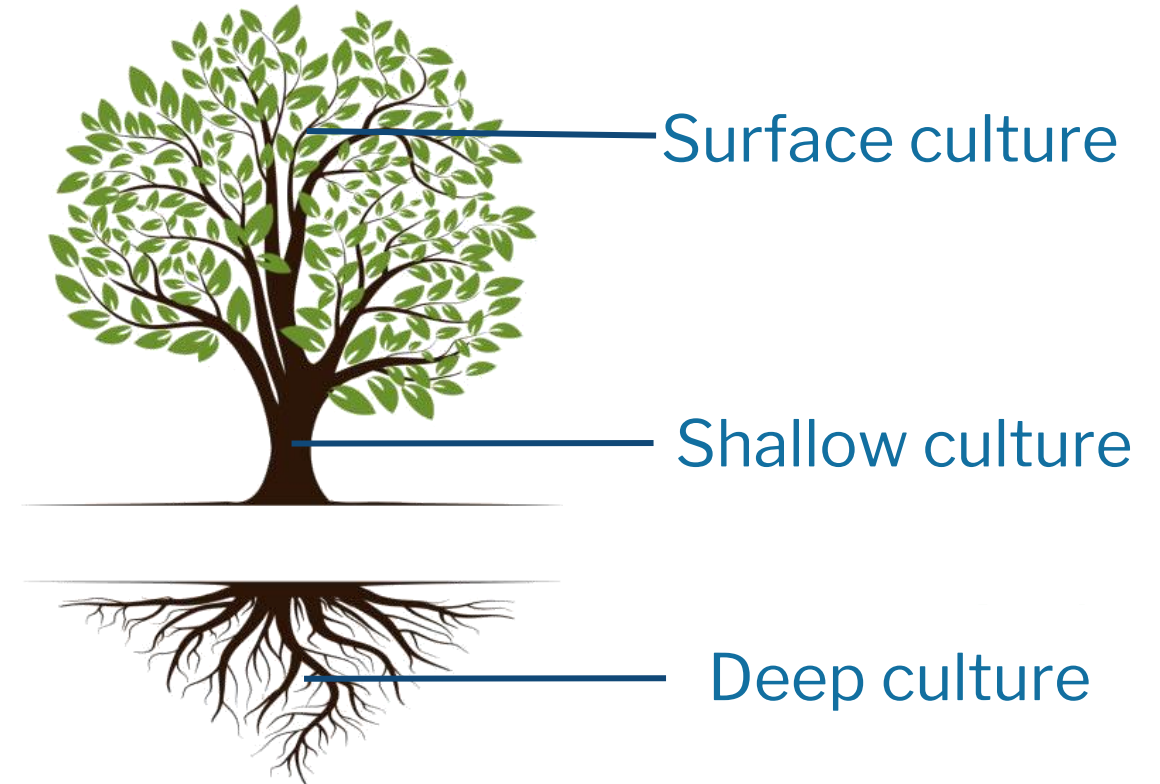


# Defining Culture

The total range of activities and ideas of a group of people with shared traditions, which are transmitted and reinforced by members of the group.

“Culture is what feels good and makes sense.”

Gloria Ladson-Billings



Adapted from Zaretta Hammond



# Ways culture is expressed in schools



- Greetings
- Language
- Social interactions
- Music
- Vocabulary
- Spatial reasoning
- Relationships
- Perceptions of time
- Artifacts and objects
- Values and principles
- Non-verbal communication: gestures, body language, facial expressions
- Clothing, fashion
- Curriculum materials
- Instruction
- Learning
- Hairstyles
- Physical appearances



## Activity: Ways we see culture in schools

What does culture look like, sound like, and feel like in the schools and classrooms where you work?

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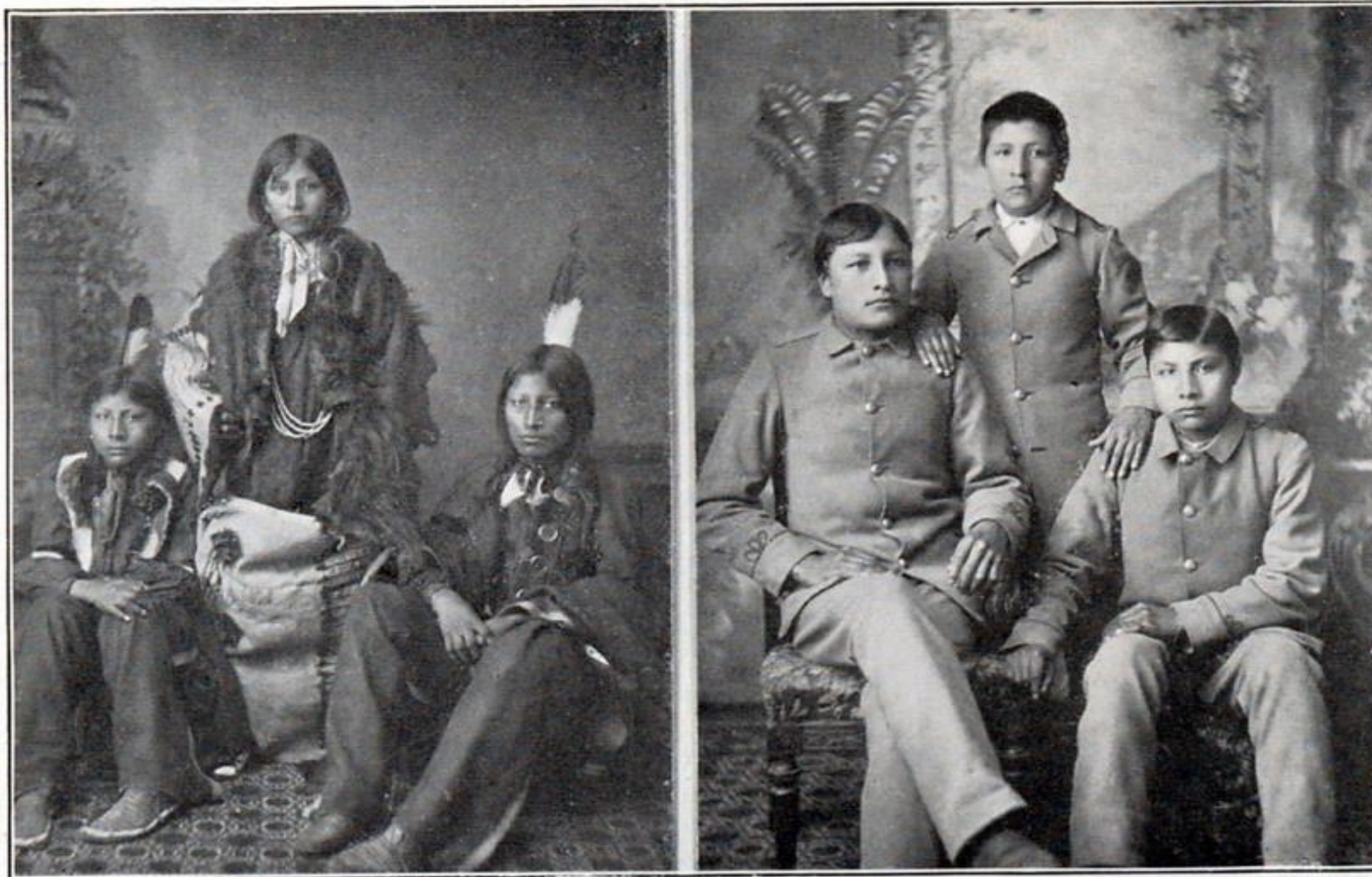
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WOUNDED YELLOW ROBE      HENRY STANDING BEAR  
CHAUNCY YELLOW ROBE

SIoux BOYS AS THEY ENTERED THE SCHOOL IN 1883.

THREE YEARS LATER.





# Legacy of Deculturalization



*Deculturalization* refers to the process of destroying a people's culture and replacing it with a new culture from the dominant group.

Historically, education has at times been used as a method of control and forced assimilation.

(Spring, 2022)



# Culturally Sustaining Education Movements



Image credit: Devra Weber. From the La Raza Photograph Collection.  
UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

There is a long tradition of culturally sustaining education movements and demands for culturally affirming spaces.



# 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





# What does affirming students' cultures look like in practice?



**What Culturally Responsive Teaching Looks Like: A Native Educator Explains:**  
An expert on Native education explains what culturally responsive teaching is and why it is so important for students.



# How to Create Culturally Affirming Spaces

- Co-create discussion agreements with students and facilitate conversations that foster critical consciousness (e.g., analyze multiple perspectives, ask critical questions, advocate for social change).
- Incorporate students' home language (e.g., heritage language, vernaculars, code-switching, translanguaging) into instruction and include materials in students' home language.
- Express value, respect, and asset perspectives of students' language(s), culture(s), and communities.





# Culturally Affirming Spaces:

## Instruction, Curriculum, Engagement

- Validates students' lived experiences and identities
- Integrates cultural assets into classroom instruction
- Connects to the histories of racial, ethnic, and linguistic communities, both locally and nationally
- Teaches *criticality*—reading and writing to understand truth and power
- Enacts mutual respect with accountability between students and adults

## Values and acknowledgements

- Students' cultural identities by respecting their names, neighborhoods, and home culture
- What the community desires and wants to sustain through schooling
- Community languages, practices, and ways of being while providing access to the dominant culture (white, middle class, and standard English speaking)
- Students' cultural and social capital
- Cultural consciousness and self-awareness



***“My first-grade teacher gave me a new set of treasures that included U.S. cultural ways of knowing and the English language. Her learning environment, curriculum, instruction, and assessment made it blatantly clear that English and whiteness were prized. As a result, I wanted desperately to be White and worthy...” (p. 31)***

Dr. Maria del Carmen Salazar  
(del Carmen Salazar & Lerner, 2019)





*“My educational experience was rooted in how people on the continent of Africa viewed their relationship between teaching and learning; scholars and scholarship; and self-discipline, self-determination, and education... The Black Teaching Tradition is grounded in the humanity of students and is meant to support them specifically, but not exclusively.”*

Sharif El-Mekki  
(TED Talk, 2023)





## Activity: Personal & Professional Reflection

In your schooling, were culturally affirming experiences prevalent? Culturally harmful experiences?

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# Examining Culture at a Systems Level



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

-W. Edwards Deming

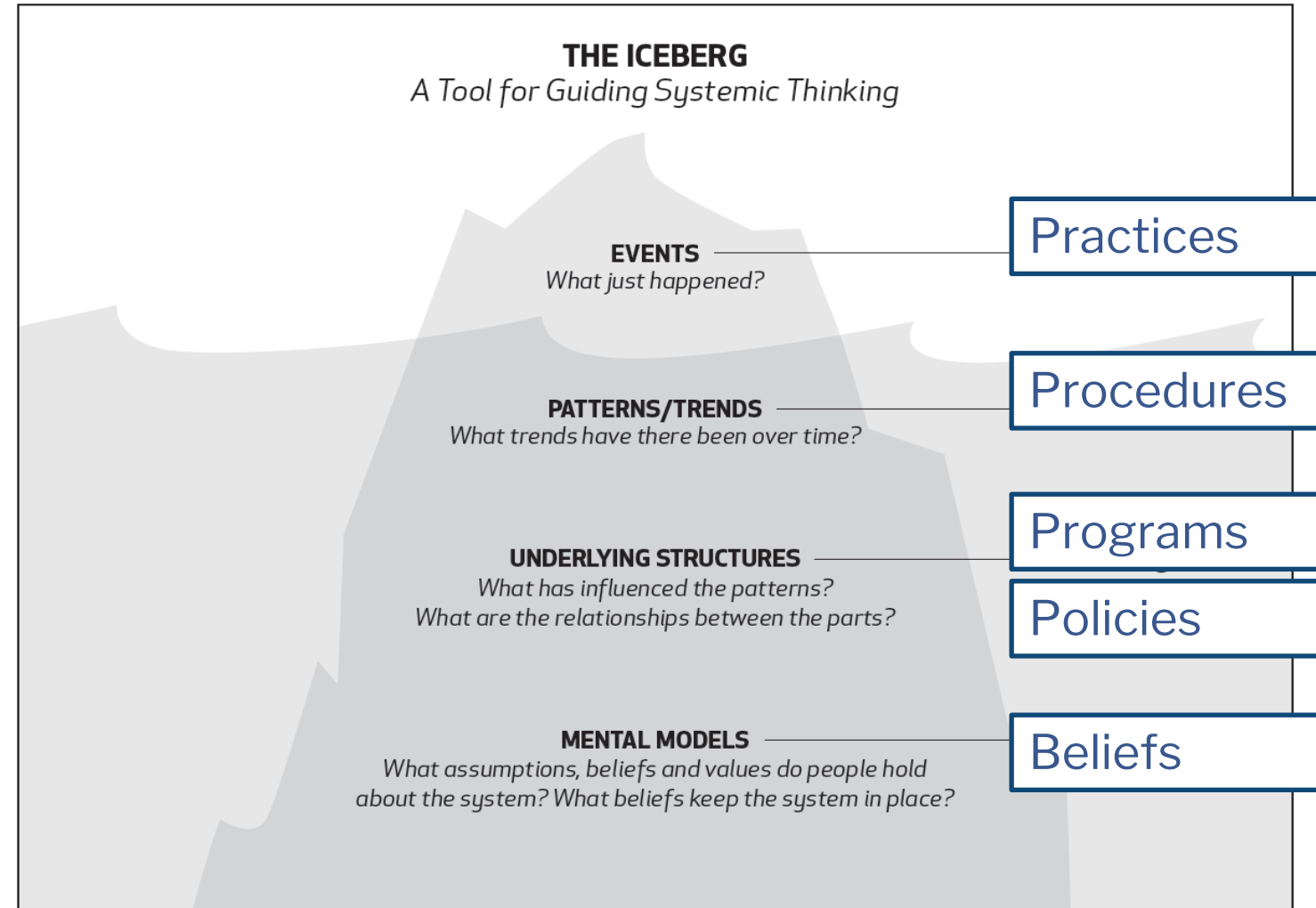


# Systems Culture

- Language used to describe students and families
- Acceptable and unacceptable behaviors (policies, procedures)
- Funding and resources allocation and distribution
- Professional Development
- School/district calendars
- Who is consulted or asked to provide feedback
- Authoritative/accountability lines—who reports to whom
- Level of safety
- What is supervised and prioritized
- Teacher commentary, referrals, and complaints



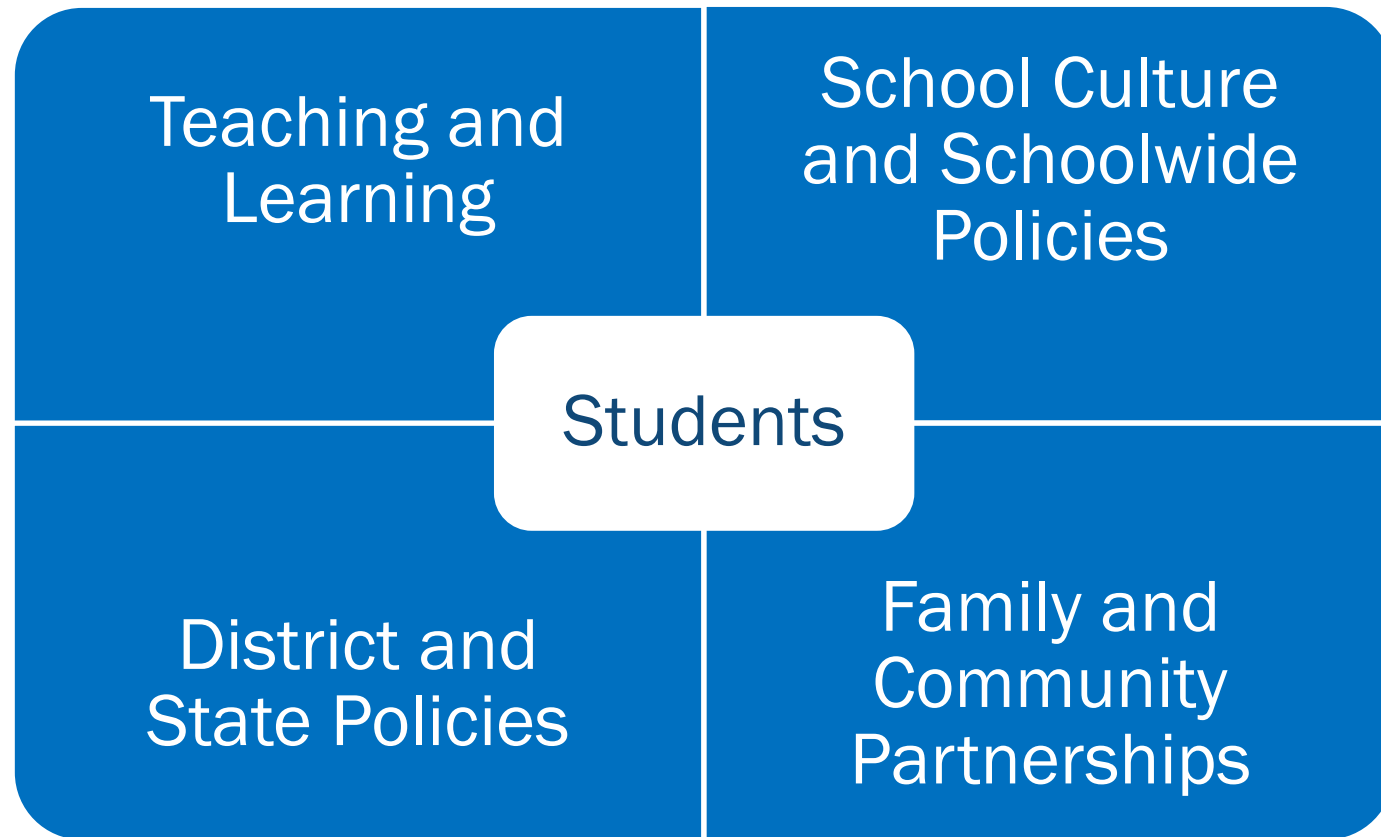
Much of the  
system is  
beneath the  
surface







# District Systemic Focus





# Common Systems Barriers

- A culture of compliance
- Race-neutral or color evasive approaches
- Implicit/explicit bias and incongruent beliefs
- Over-reliance on structural or strategic changes, and avoiding mindset and beliefs work
- Incoherent policies and legislation, and unrealistic timelines
- Fragmented problem-solving; siloed or departments working in isolation
- Not regularly looking at disaggregated data and addressing challenges
- Lack of system-wide organization around identified approach or strategy
- Political and relational challenges
- Failing to acknowledge blind spots, not having a plan for addressing obstacles and improving existing practices



## Reflection:

Consider how you steward and uphold systemic culture in your context.

In your role, how can you create a culture that is responsive and sustains students' and families' cultures?



# Culturally Responsive- Sustaining Education (CRSE)



# Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CRSE)



Centers and values students' cultures and identities

Uses rigorous and relevant curriculum, and anti-oppressive teaching practices



Builds strong, positive relationships between students, families, and school staff

Supports students to develop the knowledge, skills, and vision to transform the status quo toward liberation





## Culturally Responsive- Sustaining Mindsets

- Believing that culture is not an addition but is a critical component of education.
- Believing that critical and continuous self-reflection is required to dismantle systems of biases and inequities rooted in our country's history, culture, and institutions.
- Believing that students and their families are individuals with their own assets, knowledge, and abilities who should be valued and consulted.

(NYSED, 2019)



# Culturally Responsive Leadership Framework

(Khalifa, 2016)



Develop culturally responsive teachers

Promote culturally responsive/inclusive school environment



Critically self-reflect on leadership behaviors

Engage students, parents, and indigenous contexts





# Individual Reflection & Small Group Discussion

- How can you support the implementation of CRSE in your local context?

## Provide concrete examples

- Physical Environment
- Relationships & Interactions
- Family Engagement
- Extracurricular Activities
- Attitudes & Dispositions
- Curricula & Content
- Teaching Methods
- Behavioral Systems
- Student Support & Special Education





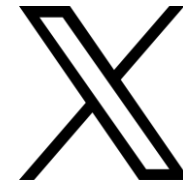
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# Thank you.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Please complete the evaluation form and  
tell us how we did!

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