Authentic Youth, Family, and Community Engagement

Operations, Partnerships, and Innovation Team

Presentation by Stacy Broach: Director of the Operations Partnerships and Innovations Team

06/2024

What is Your Legacy

Name and Position

What does your data tell you about who is not being served equitably at your school or district?

What would those particular students and families in your school community say about how you show up for them?

Session Overview

- **Overview of Operations Partnerships and Innovations Team**
- **Guided discussion using "Mindset Cards"**
  - What are barriers to creating and sustaining authentic Family, Youth, Community partnerships?
  - Collectively share and develop strategies to address root causes.
  - What type of support is needed to do this work well?

Equity requires changing who is centered

We are trying to shift from a 'we know best' culture.

— Dr. Steve Constantino

Co-creation means collaboration as equal partners with individuals and groups who will be affected by the outcome.

Why? Not to make people feel like they belong, not to get buy-in for our ideas. Rather, *because we need each other.* We don't know what we don't know. So if we don't co-create, we'll end up building the same thing, making the same decisions. We know the outcome of that.

How does it begin? By open communication. By actively listening. By building relationships of trust and respect.

Mindset Cards
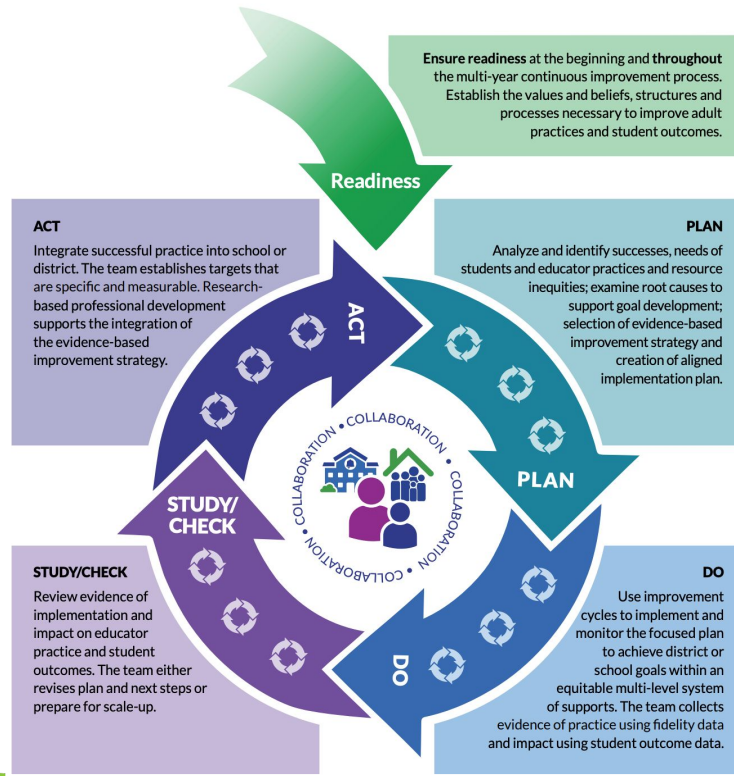
Toward a Statewide Logic Model

- What will it look like for Wisconsin educators, beginning with DPI, to *center* home/school partnerships in all of our work?

- Communities of practice for applied family engagement work?

Centering **Partnerships with Families, Youth, and Communities**

How should DPI leverage existing systems and supports in this work?

- Existing laws/grants with mandates for family engagement

- Continuous Improvement requirements/models

- Mindset shifts & other equity work

- Policy Advisors

- Other

DPI Continuous Improvement Rubric

Readiness — Ensure readiness at the beginning and throughout the multi-year continuous improvement process. Establish the values and beliefs, structures and processes necessary to improve adult practices and student outcomes.

ACT — Integrate successful practice into school or district. The team establishes targets that are specific and measurable. Research-based professional development supports the integration of the evidence-based improvement strategy.

PLAN — Analyze and identify successes, needs of students and educator practices and resource inequities; examine root causes to support goal development; selection of evidence-based improvement strategy and creation of aligned implementation plan.

STUDY/CHECK — Review evidence of implementation and impact on educator practice and student outcomes. The team either revises plan and next steps or prepare for scale-up.

DO — Use improvement cycles to implement and monitor the focused plan to achieve district or school goals within an equitable multi-level system of supports. The team collects evidence of practice using fidelity data and impact using student outcome data.

Engagement (collaboration) is in the center of the diagram, but it is not central in the rubric components.

- Only 1 component out of 21 is about engagement.
- The component does not describe meaningful engagement in planning and decision making.
- Though engagement is required throughout the improvement process, the engagement item is 13th in the rubric.
- Engagement is not mentioned at all in the item about needs assessment.
- Most of the text about representation on improvement teams is outside the rubric, in the front matter.

Let's Connect

Find one person you do not know and discuss the following Questions:

2 minute connection
1 minute large group share

3 Rounds!

Hiring Policies and Procedures

- Is your school hiring staff from historically and institutionally marginalized communities?

- How does your school/district involve stakeholders who are furthest from resources in the hiring process?

- How are your hiring policies and procedures in alignment with hiring staff from this population?

Engagement in Practice: College Student Intern

- Hired OPI's first student intern to focus on Youth Engagement.
- Had a young person of color serve on the interview panel.
- Compensated the young person who served on the interview panel.

Nia C. Taylor

Culture and Climate

- How is the culture at your school for historically and institutionally marginalized staff and students? How do you know?

- How long do staff from those backgrounds typically stay and work in the school? What is contributing to their length of employment?

Engagement in Practice: Creating Safe Spaces

- Employee Resource Group: Women of Color was the first formalized employee resource group at a state agency in Wisconsin. LGBTQ resource group.

- Culture and Climate Survey for Department Staff second year distributing to all staff

Two-Way Communication

- Are you collectively making decisions with families, students and communities?

- Are you sharing power when it is not required or mandated?

- Are you routinely inviting students and families into decision making spaces to inform decisions?

- Are you sharing information and being transparent with information?

Engagement in Practice

Centering

People Closest

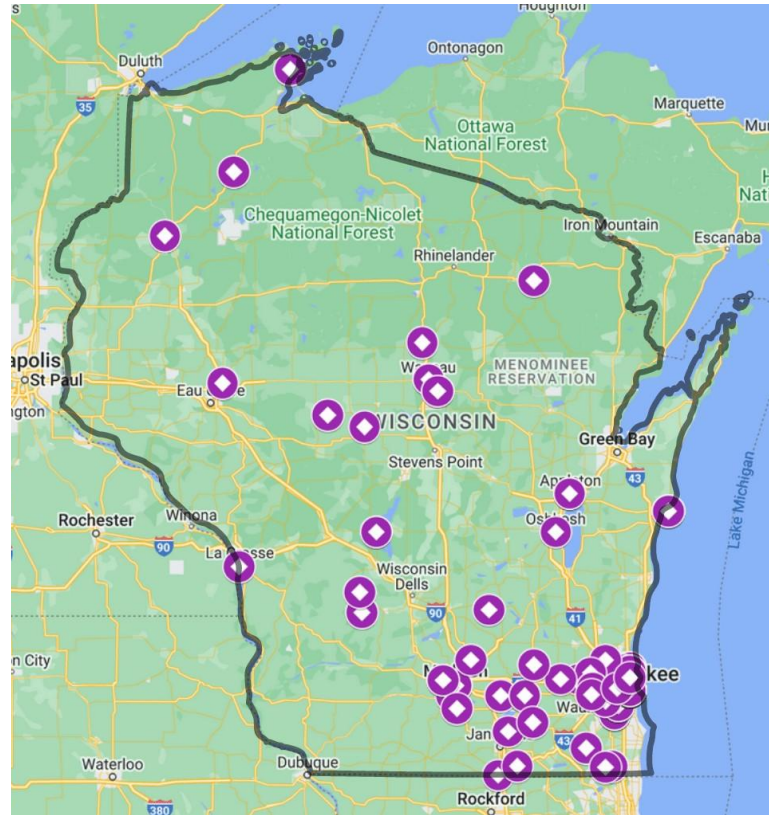to the Issues

Two-Way Communication

- **Youth Power Council: youth-led statewide council charged by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction in partnership with education stakeholders**

- **Family Advisory Council For Engagement (FACE): Family and Caregiver led Council appointed by State Superintendents Dr. Underly.**

- **Love in Action: Book study cohorts facilitate by department staff with educators across the state**

Youth Power: Strategies

- Learn about and help other young people understand education policy;
- Advise state decision makers at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction;
- Work on statewide projects to improve the education system;
- Advocate for policy changes at the state, district, and school levels;
- Collaborate with other groups of young people in Wisconsin seeking to change the education system.

Demographics

- **82 applicants**
- **Diverse group of applicants**
  - Geographically diverse
  - Racially diverse
  - Gender diversity
  - Ability diverse
  - Age diverse

If you could change one thing about school, what would it be?

Wisconsin Schools Research & Policy Brief: Project Guide

Purpose of this guide: Help people in Wisconsin research issues related to schools that are important to them, and provide communities, school leaders and policymakers with insight and recommendations for change.

How to use this guide: However it is helpful! It is a workspace to describe your issue, build up your knowledge base, and make recommendations to a targeted audience for action. You can use this to then create a research and policy brief (e.g. infographic, video, social media posts, blog, etc) to share what you found. This can be used individually or with a team.

Youth Power

Team member name(s):

Section I: What is Going Down in Our Schools

A. Identify an issue in our schools you care about

How would you briefly describe this issue to someone who hasn't ever been in a Wisconsin school? If it is a problem, what are the root causes? What are the impacts of this problem? For whom and where? Are the impacts felt equally? Or is your issue something great that is happening that more people should know about? Is it great for everyone? What is the "special sauce" for it being great?

B. Tell your story

Why is this issue important to you? What are your own experiences with the issue (or friends' or family's)? How do your own identities and positionalities impact how you experience this issue? If you are working in a team, how does a diversity of identities in your team build your understanding of the issue? What do you need others to know? Check out these resources to help visualize the issue

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Resources for Research and Policy Projects on Wisconsin Schools
We constantly build this list, please email suggested additions to: wiyouthpower@gmail.com !

Describing the Issue

- How to create a problem tree
- How to create and use concept maps

Building a Knowledge Base

Publicly available datasets on schools and education:

- *WISE Dash: Data on Wisconsin Schools collected by Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
  - Quick start video and guides
  - WISE Dash public data dashboard
- Youth Behavior Risk Survey (YRBS)
  - Explanation from Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
  - YRBS data dashboard
- Education Data Explorer
- Civil Rights Data Collection
- EdBuild tool to compare district funding and other data

Research reports on Wisconsin:

- From research and evaluation groups
  - Wisconsin Policy Forum
- From government agencies
  - Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau

Collect your own data: Tools for collecting your own data

Finding policies that relate to your issue:
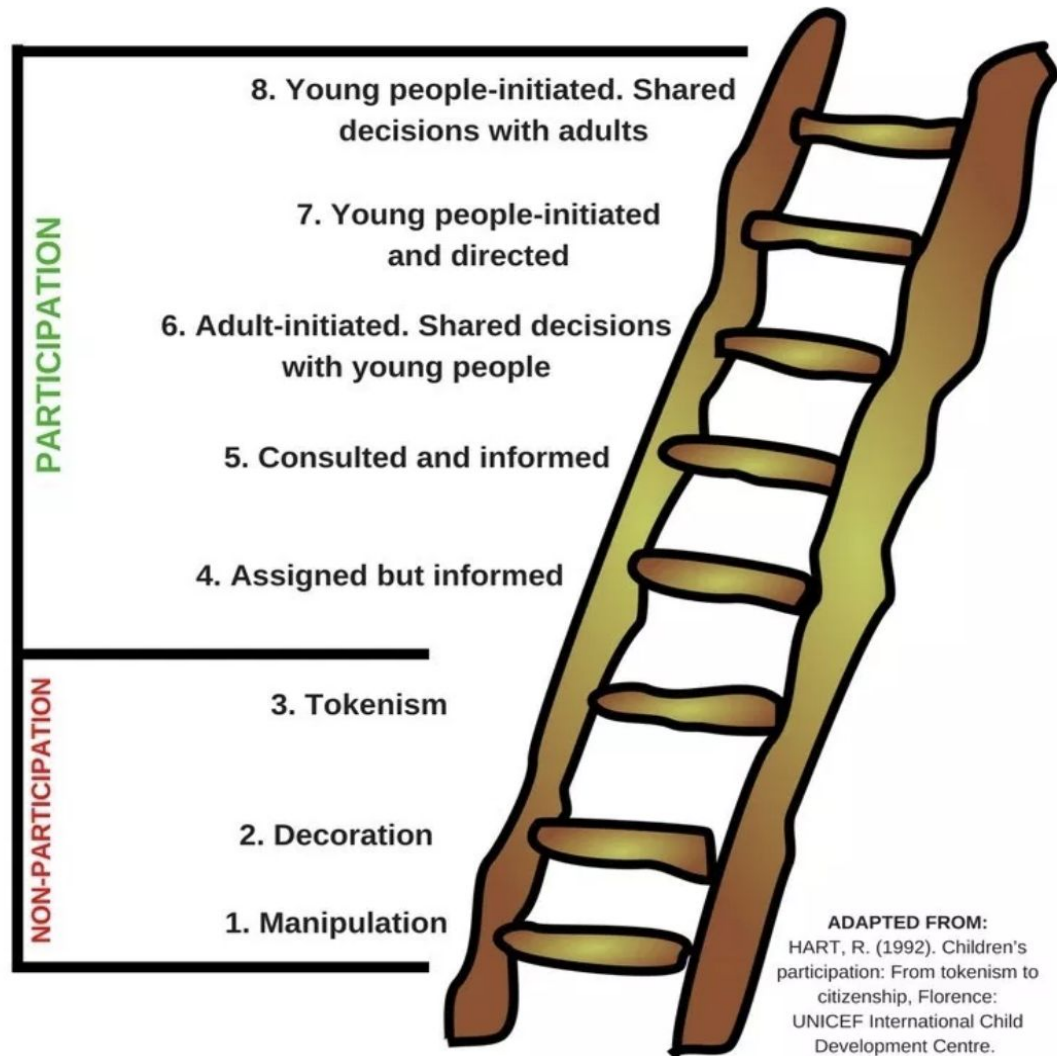
- Proposed state laws: Search bills being proposed in the state legislature via Open States
- Actual state laws: Search and read state laws in Wisconsin
- Actual state administrative rules from Department of Public Instruction
- District: Search [your district] + "school board" to find the actual policies

Youth Power Projects Cohort 2

- Young People's Projects
  - Student Bill Of Rights, Stacy Broach
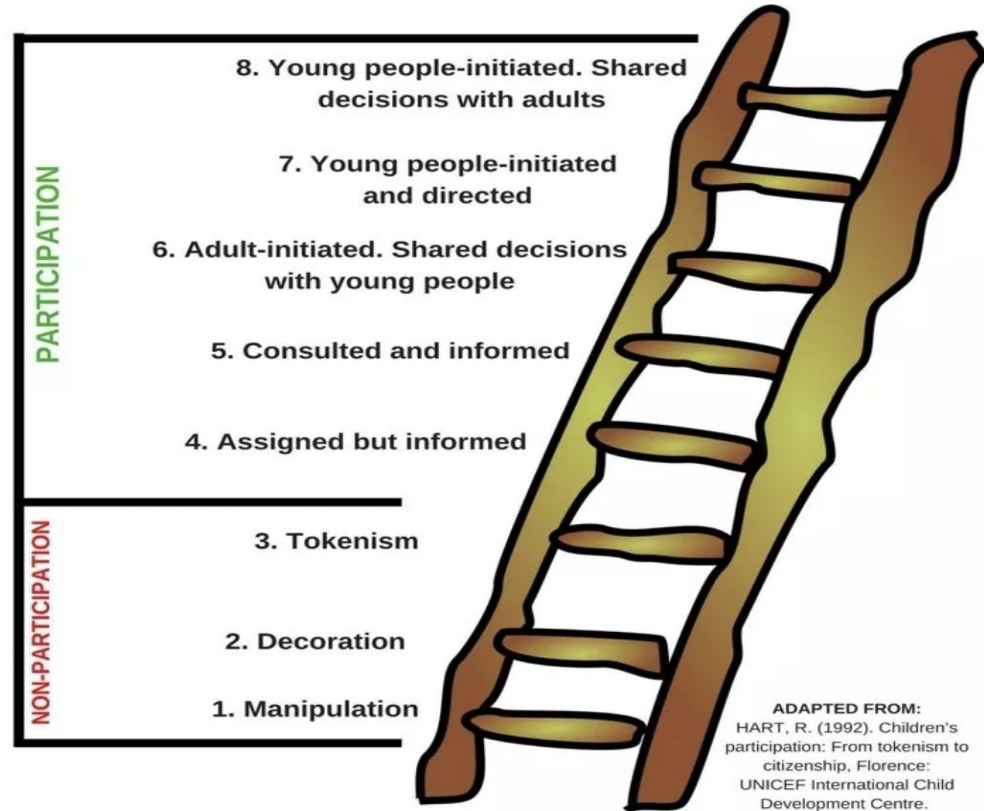 - Youth Council Collaboration, Nia Taylor

Where do your youth engagement efforts typically fall?

PARTICIPATION

8. Young people-initiated. Shared decisions with adults

7. Young people-initiated and directed

6. Adult-initiated. Shared decisions with young people

5. Consulted and informed

4. Assigned but informed

NON-PARTICIPATION

3. Tokenism

2. Decoration

1. Manipulation

ADAPTED FROM:
HART, R. (1992). Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship, Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre.

Small Group Discussion

1. **Move to small groups of like youth participation levels**
2. **Discuss:**
   a. Your current efforts and barriers?
   b. What are the root causes of the barriers you are experiencing?

PARTICIPATION

8. Young people-initiated. Shared decisions with adults

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NON-PARTICIPATION

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Group 1

Co-Creation Card

Our educational system tends to be shaped to fit the needs of students in the majority. What patterns do you see in your school/district? Who is "at the table" when programming is created, and who is not?

Spend some time with the Asset Mindset card. (5 min. solo reflection)

Insights from the cards: (final word protocol) Is there something on the card that speaks to the issues you are seeing, or that would help people in your school or district see a student group or community differently? What opportunities for action do you see? What additional insights can you share?

Group Wrap-up: Do you see opportunities to use these insights in a way that would leverage larger change? Are there other insights you would like to share with the larger group?

Co-Creation:
Authentic collaboration

Co-creation means collaboration as equal partners with other stakeholder groups. Each of our individual perspectives is limited, but we don't know what we don't know, so we need each other. Each of us has a crucial piece. For example, our students, families and communities know their needs and assets better than anyone else. There is no better way to make sure the necessary skills and expertise are available than including all stakeholders and working side by side. It also helps prevent unintended consequences.

To improve things on a larger scale, teams at the different levels of the educational system have to co-create, because again, each group has a crucial piece.

Paradoxically, admitting our own limitations opens up new possibilities for connecting to the allies and resources we need to move beyond them.

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.
—African proverb, exact origin unknown

Guiding/Coaching Questions:

- How have you collaborated to define the values and beliefs on which you will base your plans and efforts?
- How well do your working agreements, systems, structures, and processes support ongoing collaborative work? Do they help ensure full participation?
- How are decisions and decision-making processes made transparent to those they affect? Does everyone have a point of entry to make a suggestion or raise an issue?
- Does everyone have sufficient collaborative skills, or would additional professional learning—for example, about facilitation—be of benefit?
- How are the power dynamics around information in your group? Does everyone have access to the same information? Is information primarily shared in a "top down" way, or does it flow in multiple directions?

Co-Creation: Authentic Collaboration

Sample Practices:

- **Aim for input, not just feedback.** Input allows something truly different to emerge. Feedback when something is already underway allows only surface changes, not fundamental changes that will really affect outcomes.
- **Build collaboration skills—**like facilitation, active listening, conflict transformation, change management—through professional learning.
- **Consider who is leading meetings**—ensure diverse perspectives in facilitation.
- **Shape agendas together** to build common understanding and commitment—a shared sense of purpose.
- **Gather feedback at meetings** to help improve future meetings.
- **Shape meeting activities and materials thoughtfully** so people with different learning styles can access information and share ideas easily.
- **Create team protocols together** to ensure they work for everyone.
- **If you belong to a marginalized or less powerful group**, connect with your group. Think together about how to gain a seat at the table. How would having a seat at the table work logistically? How would it benefit the project/enterprise?

Common Pitfalls

- Surveying stakeholders and believing that will give you sufficient understanding of their perspectives and needs
- Believing you can understand stakeholders well enough to incorporate their perspectives yourself—they don't need a seat at the table
- Envisioning a collaboration and then inviting partners into your vision
- Assuming that only leaders should make decisions, consulting with other leaders; assuming leaders have sufficient knowledge and understanding to make good decisions without consulting others to gain the knowledge only they possess
- Lack of transparency—not incorporating it as a foundational element
- Assuming open discussion of a topic in a meeting is truly open—not taking the time to ensure meeting structures allow everyone to participate and share their genuine perspectives
- Forgetting to ask at the end of a meeting, "Who else needs to know about this?"

Resources & Points of Connection

- The Min Specs exercise from the Liberating Structures website helps groups articulate a collective vision for a project or initiative that reflects everyone's values.
- Racial Equity Tools website's collection of alliances and coalitions resources, compiled by a consortium of equity organizations
- Equitable Multi-Level System of Supports (EMLSS) model: positive culture, family & community engagement, strong shared leadership
- DPI's Model to Inform Culturally Responsive Practice

Asset Mindset Card

Black & brown students (including all students of color and English learners) are typically not considered when decisions are being made. What patterns do you see in your school/district? Are there specific groups that are "invisible"? (3 minutes - Brief group discussion)

Spend some time with the Asset Mindset card. (5 min. solo reflection)

Insights from the cards: (final word protocol) *Is there something on the card that speaks to the issues you are seeing, or that would help people in your school or district see a student group or community differently? What opportunities for action do you see? What additional insights can you share?*

Group Wrap-up: *Do you see opportunities to use these insights in a way that would leverage larger change? Are there other insights you would like to share with the larger group?*

Asset mindset:
Seeking and recognizing strengths

An asset mindset works against the common habit of looking at members of particular populations as deficient or in need of rescue. It prioritizes breaking down stereotypes and seeking, recognizing, and making use of strengths in individuals, families, and communities.

An asset mindset is an ingredient of respect that enables people to co-create as equal partners. It also opens up new resources and connections and increases the possibilities for creative solutions.

And…keep in mind that turning our usual way of thinking about assets on its head has two sides. Seeing assets where one typically would not look is one side. The other side is looking differently at systems, processes, and institutions. The things traditionally considered assets—in people and organizations—need to be examined for their harmful effects.

If we care about transformation, then we will stay focused on gifts, to such an extent that our work becomes to simply bring the gifts of those on the margin into the center. —Peter Block

Guiding/Coaching Questions:

- What are the assets of the communities of color you work with? What about other communities typically seen as needing help rather than full of creative solutions?
- How might systems change if these assets were brought to the center?
- What might help the people you work with notice their own deficit thinking and focus on assets more often?
- What can you do to promote regular use of an asset mindset?
- How might the unique gifts of staff and stakeholders be incorporated in your work?
- What strengths do you bring to the table from the marginalized communities you belong to? Are there ways you might bring your gifts to the center more and use your allies to help?

Asset mindset: *Seeking and recognizing strengths*

Sample Practices:

- Look for the intelligent, compassionate, and innovative ways in which communities and individuals our institutions weren't designed for have created practices, organizations, and other assets to help them thrive.
  - Where do they find inspiration? What arts are passed along or invented?
  - What kinds of entrepreneurship and innovation are happening in the community?
  - How are they working to change oppressive institutions and practices? Where have they succeeded?
  - What practices and organizations have they created to connect and share with each other?
  - How do they protect the vulnerable?
  - What kinds of things do they do to make a better future for the next generation?
  - Look for leadership beyond traditional roles:
    - Who is considered wise or compassionate?
    - Who is relied on to organize, convene, or get things done in the community?
    - Who always knows what's going on?
- Actively look for assets other individuals bring to the table, especially if they belong to a group that experiences structural inequalities, and especially if something about them annoys or frustrates you. How might the thing that annoys you actually be a strength?

Common Pitfalls

- Confusing an asset mindset with always "looking on the bright side"—when examining inequitable systems and practices, looking primarily for assets can be a way of avoiding looking at the damage being done; though it's uncomfortable, understanding and facing up to the harm opens up possibilities for positive change
- Lowering expectations; making things easier to help people "succeed," instead of finding and building on their genuine assets and equipping them for real challenges and actual success
- Standardization as a mechanism to achieve greater equity—this confuses equality with equity, and it can interfere with meeting individual needs and developing unique gifts
- Not questioning "normal"—whose normal is it?

Resources & Points of Connection

- Blanchard, Angela. 2011. "Asset-Based Community Development". Houston: TEDxHouston. youtube.com/watch?v=TaX5DUGC1CU
- Racial Equity Tools website's collection of community assessment tools, resources compiled by a consortium of equity organizations
- DPI's EMLSS model: positive culture
- DPI's Model to Inform Culturally Responsive Practice: believe all learners can & will achieve at high levels

Supports Needed for Impactful Engagement

What do you need from:

- ○ **Yourself**
- ○ **School Leadership**
- ○ **District Leadership**
- ○ **DPI Leadership**

........to address root causes to authentic

Family partnerships?

Wrap Up

- What are 1-3 actions you will commit to, starting tomorrow to get one step closer to engaging in shared decision making with family, youth and community?

[Add Contact Info Here to Stay Connected](#)

Thank you for coming!