All Means All!:
Creating Equitable Learning Environments

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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)

What Has History Taught Us?
All students have not benefited equally from access to educational institutions?

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)
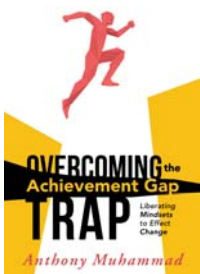
Is Change Necessary?

"Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result."
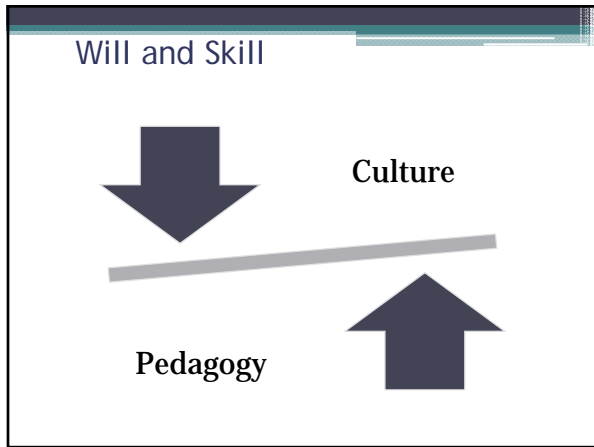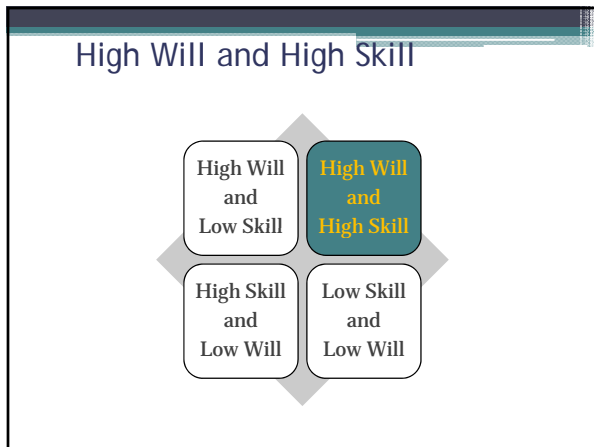
—Albert Einstein

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."

Two Forms of Change

- Technical–structural (skill)
- Cultural (will)

Will and Skill

Culture

Pedagogy

High Will and High Skill

| High Will and Low Skill	High Will and High Skill
High Skill and Low Will	Low Skill and Low Will

Cultural Change

"Structural change that is not supported by cultural change will eventually be overwhelmed by the culture, for it is in the culture that any organization finds meaning and stability."

Schlechty, *Shaking Up the Schoolhouse: How to Support and Sustain Educational Innovation* (2001), p. 52

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."

LEARNING BY DOING
SECOND EDITION
A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work™

Richard DuFour
Rebecca DuFour
Robert Eaker
Thomas Many

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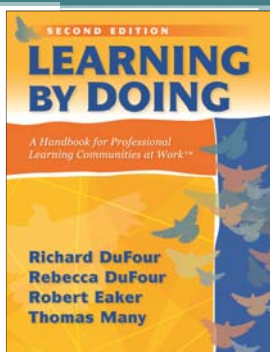
A Major Shift in Paradigm

Invitation (Meritocracy) ← → Guarantee (Egalitarianism)

Meritocracy

A system in which the talented are _chosen_ and _moved_ ahead on the basis of their achievement

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

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

Hard Fact #1

Human Beings are Complex!

Transformational Leader

The transformational leader (at all levels) is determined to lead a person into better behavior rather than being satisfied with identifying and criticizing current behavior.

What qualities do leaders need to possess to transform behavior?

The Will to Lead

- Aligning the Philosophy

- Managing Frustration

- Creating a Culture of Collaboration

- Institutionalizing Cultural Health

Hollie and Muhammad, The Will to Lead, the Skill to Teach (2011)

School Culture

"School culture is the set of norms, values, and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the 'persona' of the school."

—Deal & Peterson, 2002

Apprenticeship of Observation

- Educators have been socialized in their field since childhood and adopt the norms
- The average educator was a good student
- Educators subconsciously protect a system that was of personal benefit
- Educators implement practices that protect the system (academic obstacle course)

(Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study,* 1975)

Predetermination

- Perceptual (Everything is relative)
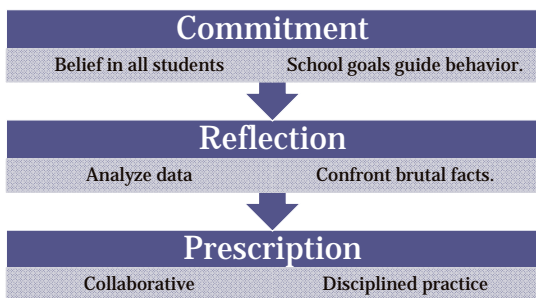
- Intrinsic (Victims remain victims)

- Institutional

How would our society respond if the Achievement Gap were reversed?

Healthy School Culture

"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."

—Kent D. Peterson in Cromwell, 2002

Prescriptive

Commitment

Belief in all students   School goals guide behavior.

Reflection

Analyze data   Confront brutal facts.

Prescription

Collaborative   Disciplined practice

Hard Fact #2

You can't hold people accountable for what you haven't made explicit.

Aligning the Philosophy - Developing Shared Purpose

The mission question challenges members of a group to reflect on the fundamental purpose of the organization, the very reason for its existence. The question asks, "Why do we exist?" "What are we here to do together?" and "What is the business of our business?"

DuFour and Eaker, PLC at Work, 1998

Developing Mission

- Who are your students?
- What are the areas where their lives could be enhanced through education?
- What will you collectively commit to focus on in order to enhance their lives?
- Mission must have a **SERVICE ORIENTATION!**

Who are Your Students?

Levey Middle School - 2001
- 97% African-American
- 72% at or below National Poverty Line
- 80% of families are headed by single mothers
- 25% - 40% annual student mobility rate
- State achievement scores well below state averages

Levey Middle School Mission

"We will work collaboratively to ensure that each student is prepared for post-secondary education"

New Frontier 21 School
A Fresh Approach

Academic Skills

Character Education And Community Service

Professional Learning Community

University Partnerships

Connection to Public and Private Sectors

Parental Partnership

Nine Core Beliefs

1. Schools are places built for the education of children, not for adult employment.
2. Schools play a major role in the future life success of students and their community.
3. Education is a profession, and educators should conduct themselves as professionals.
4. Education is a mission, and educators should conduct themselves as missionaries.
5. Schools are a communities' most precious institution, and they have the power to transform a community.
6. Children are at the center of everything that we do, and our practice should reflect their best interest.
7. We believe that schools must partner with other members of the community in order for the educational experience to be optimal.
8. We believe that character is important and that schools can help shape a child's character.
9. We believe that service to the community is important and that it is essential in a democratic society.

Pause to Think

1. Are you and your colleagues clear on your fundamental purpose?

2. What evidence would you present to prove that your school has a clear and concise shared purpose?

Hard Fact #3

A highly frustrated staff is a highly unproductive staff.

Managing Frustration

Human beings are complex!

Toxic School Culture

"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."

—Kent D. Peterson in Cromwell, 2002

Descriptive and Deflective

"Frustration" – The Root of a Toxic Culture

Frustration = "A feeling of anxiety resulting from the inability to perform a task"

• A mismatch between skill set and task

• Causes people to deflect blame onto others and create covert alliances with people experiencing similar struggle

Recipe for Disaster

- Inappropriate preparation
- Poor support system
- Task overload

Culture of Complaint

- Complaining becomes a crutch or coping mechanism for high levels of frustration
- There is little to no evidence that complaining in isolation is detrimental to an organization
- Complaining becomes damaging when it becomes a habit

The Culture of Complaint
Two V's

- Venting
- Validation

Time Out!

"To be a good teammate, your responsibilities
must be more important than your rights"

Orr, J. (2009). Our Top Ten Favorite John Wooden Quotes. Christian Science Monitor.
Boston, MA.

Real Difference

Healthy Culture   Toxic Culture

**Problem   Complainers
solvers**

Good to Great, Jim Collins

What do great corporations/organizations do
differently than good/average organizations?

1. They seek and confront the "brutal facts"
2. They get the right people on the "bus" and sit
   them in the "right seats"

The Quandary

Tweeners

Fundamentalists

Believers

Survivors

(Muhammad, 2009)
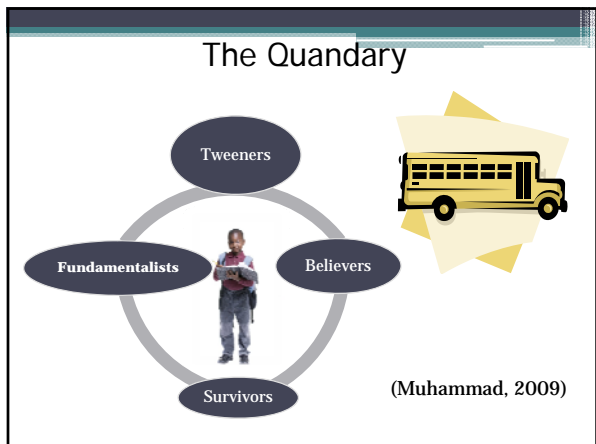
Believers

Objective:

Success for All Students

The Believers

- Very intrinsically motivated
- Flexibility with students (academically and behaviorally)
- Mission driven/connection to school or community
- Willing to confront negative talk and attitudes towards children, but only under extreme circumstances
- Varied levels of pedagogical and professional skill

Pause to Think!

- Is your school culture focused on success for students or the likes/dislikes of the adults?

- Are your Believers politically active or docile?

- Are your Believers active in the informal culture?

Tweeners

Objective:

To Find Comfort Zone Within the Organization

The Tweeners

- Loosely-coupled with the school mission
- Enthusiastic about the idealistic nature of school, but have not quite hit the tipping point
- They stay out of school and district politics
- Follows instructions as given by administration creating a 'Wall of Silence' (considered "good" teachers)
- One extreme experience (Moment of Truth) can swing them to be a believer or a fundamentalist

Pause to Think!

- Do you have a significant amount of turnover among your Tweeners? If so, why? If not, what do you do to support and retain them?

- Who supports your Tweeners when they have their "Moment of Truth"?

Survivors

Objective:

Survival

Survivors

- Overwhelming nature of the job or life has caused clinical depression (Burnout)
- No political or organizational aspirations
- Create subcontracts with student to broker a "cease-fire" agreement
- Little to no professional practice is evident
- All members of the organization agree that they do not belong in the profession
- Removal and treatment is the only possible remedy

Pause to Think!

- Do you have colleagues that you feel may be Survivors or in the process of becoming a Survivor?

- If so, have you reached out to him/her? Has administration addressed the issue?

- How have your Survivors impacted students?

Fundamentalists

Objective:

Maintain Status Quo (Leave Me Alone!)

Fundamentalists

- Believe not all children can learn (Social Darwinists)
- Believe that school reform is a waste of time
- Believe in autonomy and academic freedom
- Organize to resist threat(s) to status quo
- Believe that gaps in learning are due to outside forces (students, parents, administration)
- Have varied levels of pedagogical skills

Methods:
The Three "D's"

- **Defame**

- **Disrupt**

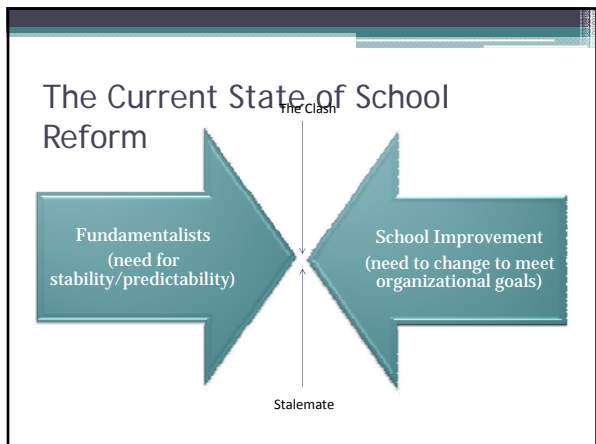- **Distract**

Pause to Think!

- **Do you have an active group of Fundamentalists at your school? If so, how have they affected the culture?**

- **Do your Believers challenge your Fundamentalists?**

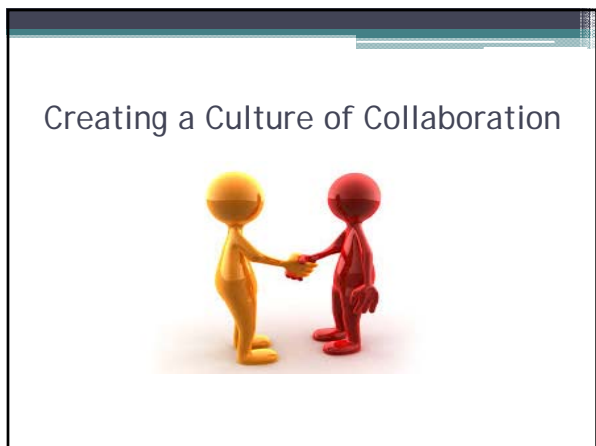- **Have you witnessed any of the three D's? If so, how has it affected your school?**

The Real Difference

Believers	**Fundamentalists**
• Goal: Success for Every Student • Accepts that change (the right change) is necessary to improve student performance • Student interest is more important that personal interest (Public Servant)	• Goal: Maintain Status Quo • Rejects any substantive change if it clashes with personal agenda • Self-interest is more important than student interest (Self Servant)

The Current State of School Reform

The Clash

Fundamentalists
(need for stability/predictability)

School Improvement
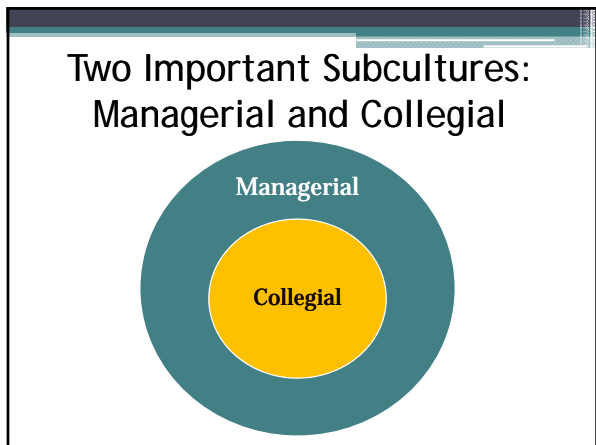(need to change to meet organizational goals)

Stalemate

Adult Drama

Dysfunctional social interactions between adult professionals within a school environment that interfere with the proper implementation of important policies, practices, and procedures that support the proper education of students

Creating a Culture of Collaboration

Leadership at Every Level

- Teacher
- Government
- Healthy School Culture
- Building Leadership
- District Leadership

Two Important Subcultures: Managerial and Collegial

Managerial

Collegial

Hard Fact #4

Being **correct** is no substitute for being **effective**.

Creating Healthy Cultures:
A Two-Way Street

Collegial	Managerial
• Control the language of the informal organization.	• Develop and maintain healthy organizational vision.
• Remove emotional tone (culture of complaint) from informal interactions.	• Develop and maintain healthy policies, practices, and procedures.
• Focus peers on mission and problem solving.	• Institutionalize organizational health.

Collaborative Teams of Teachers

• Forming
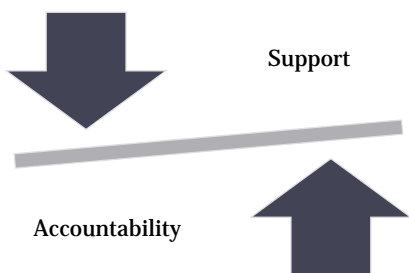
• Norming

• Storming

• Performing

Pause to Think

• How well do teachers and site leaders collaborate in your school and/or school district?

• In your school and/or district, is being effective more important than being correct?

Institutionalizing Cultural Health

Moving the bus forward

Healthy cultures are two-way streets.

Support

Accountability

Fundamentalist:
Change is not easy.
"Drop Your Tools" Research

- People persist when they are given no clear reason to change.
- People persist when they do not trust the person who tells them to change.
- People persist when they view the alternative as more frightening.
- To change may mean admitting failure.

(Maclean, 1992)

Good Leaders

- Transparently communicate purpose.
- Foster collaboration.
- Build capacity.
- Hold people accountable.

Three Must-Reads for Follow-Up

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