Transforming State Systems to Improve Outcomes for Children with Disabilities

national center for systemic improvement

Pursuing Equity for Black Students in K–12 Education:

# Exploring the Intersection of Race and Disability Thought Leader Conversation (TLC) Series

Stakeholder and Family Engagement:

Creating Meaningful Opportunities for Authentic Student, Family, and Stakeholder Voice

Amanda Byrd, Heather Calomese, Natasha Capers, Debra Jennings, Dr. Fatima Morrell, and Heath Peine

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Thank you for being here!
We will begin shortly. In the meantime, please reflect on this quote and provide your thoughts in the chat.

"Fundamentally, your success in engaging every family will come down to what you think about families — every family — and their value as partners to support student learning."

— Steven Constantino
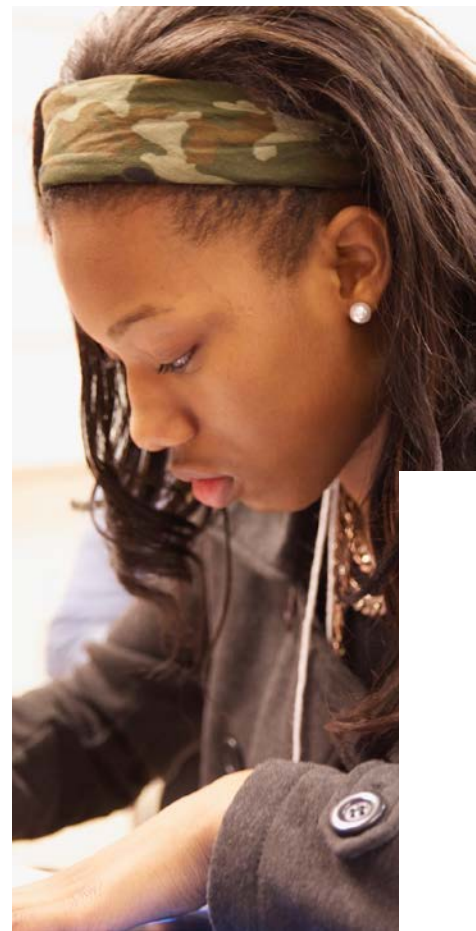
Session Agenda

Framing the TLC and Today's Session

Meet Our Thought Leaders

Stakeholder Engagement: Embracing an Equity Mindset

Policies to Engage Stakeholders and Families

Future TLC Sessions

Welcome & Introduction to NCSI

- The National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) supports states to transform systems to improve outcomes for students with disabilities

- We are committed to helping state agencies and their stakeholders understand the intersection of race and disability in education **in order to resolve inequities that disadvantage Black students with disabilities or those who may be identified** as needing special education services

Purpose of Thought Leader Conversation (TLC) Series

- A series of conversations with experts focused on the intersection of race and disability in K–12 education

- Exploring ways systems can improve teaching and learning conditions and outcomes for Black students with disabilities or those who may be identified as having a disability

Series Recap

Foundational Session (held November 10, 2020)

- Examined the reasons for long-standing inequitable learning conditions and outcomes for Black K–12 students

- Identified systemic beliefs, policies, procedures, and practices that contribute to racial inequities for Black students in K–12 education

- The session recording, webinar materials, and related resources are available:

https://ncsi.wested.org/resources/pursuing-equity/

Series Recap cont.

Data Literacy Session (held December 15, 2020)

- Explored equity-driven, culturally responsive data literacy

- Examined the role of data from various perspectives, including using data to meet the needs of Black students rather than traditional approaches which often focus on stratifying their performance

- Explored strategies and resources for collecting, analyzing, and making meaning of data to achieve equity for Black students with disabilities or those who may be (mis)identified as having disabilities

- The session recording, webinar materials, and related resources are available here:

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Framing Today's Session

Apology vs. Reconciliation

Apologies don't mean anything if you keep doing what you're sorry for...

~Author Unknown

Today's Session Objectives

In order to create equitable learning conditions and outcomes for Black students with disabilities or those who may be (mis)identified:

- Recognize the importance of authentic stakeholder and family voice and engagement
- Examine the systemic beliefs, policies and procedures, and practices rooted in dominant culture that hinder meaningful stakeholder and family engagement
- Identify policies and practices that create authentic engagement to welcome and support stakeholders and families

Please Meet Our Thought Leaders...

2020-2021 Thought Leaders

Dr. Eddie Fergus
Temple University

Alexandria Harvey
WestEd

David Lopez
WestEd

Dr. Erica McCray
CEEDAR Center

Dr. Kent McIntosh
Positive Behavioral &
Interventions Support Center

Dr. Tom Munk
IDEA Data Center

2020-2021 Thought Leaders Cont.

Esley Newton
OSEP, US Department of Education

Christine Pilgrim
OSEP, US Department of Education

Dr. Seena M. Skelton
Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center

Dr. Kathleen King Thorius
Great Lakes Equity Center

Dr. Zelphine Smith-Dixon
Georgia Department of Education

Dr. Saroja Warner
WestEd

2020-2021 Thought Leaders: Today's Presenters

Amanda Byrd
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

Natasha Capers
New York City Coalition for Educational Justice

Heather Calomese
California Department of Education

Debra Jennings
National Center for Systemic Improvement

Dr. Fatima Morrell
Buffalo Public Schools

Heath Peine
Wichita Public Schools

Gratitude to Parents and Students

We want to acknowledge and thank the students and families who graciously shared their perspectives with us for this presentation.
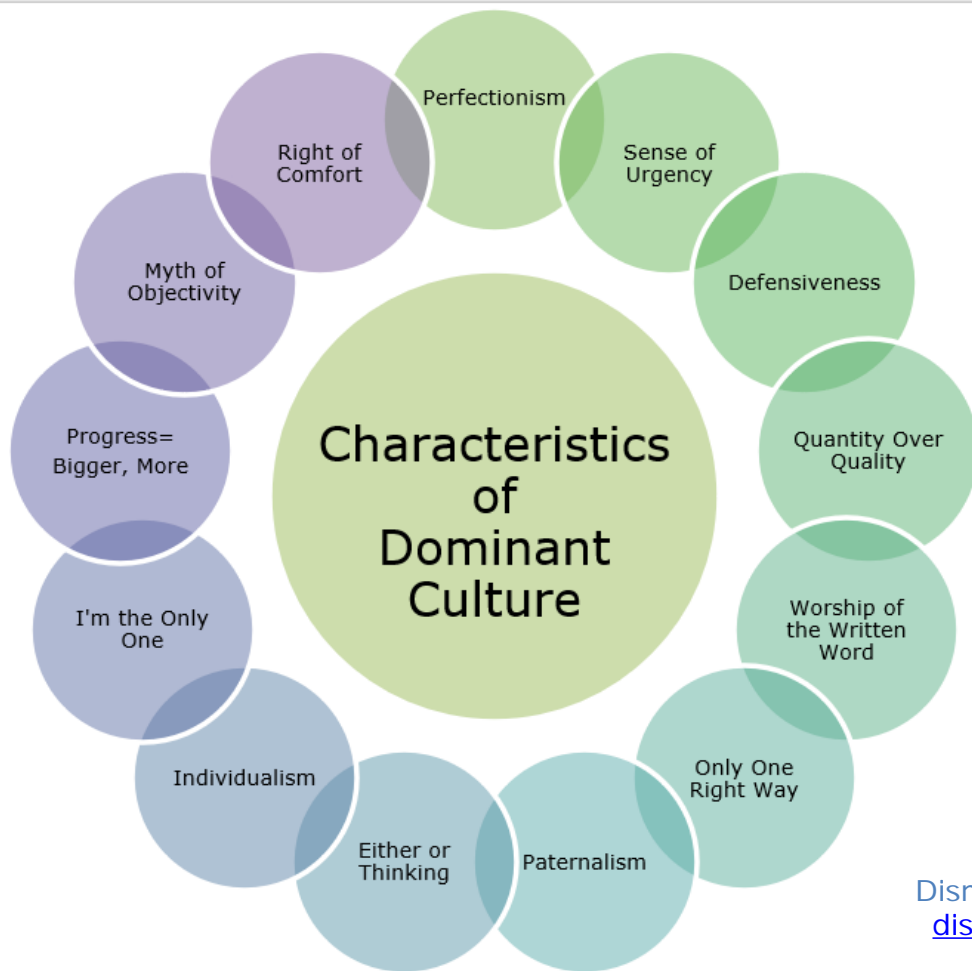
Reflection

How does your agency or organization define stakeholders (both internal and external)?

Please share your response in the chat box.

Traditional Modes of Engagement

- History of stakeholder and family engagement reflects dominant culture, mirroring management instead of genuine engagement

- These modes can be damaging because they consist of norms and standards not agreed upon by the families and stakeholders they intend to serve

Characteristics of Dominant Culture

Characteristics of Dominant Culture

- Perfectionism
- Sense of Urgency
- Defensiveness
- Quantity Over Quality
- Worship of the Written Word
- Only One Right Way
- Paternalism
- Either or Thinking
- Individualism
- I'm the Only One
- Progress= Bigger, More
- Myth of Objectivity
- Right of Comfort

(Dismantling Racism, Dismantling Racism Workbook, dismantlingracism.org 2016)

Dominant Culture and Family Engagement

- Dominant culture often dismisses or erases family engagement
- Educators and parents have different perspectives about engagement:
  - Educators claim parents do not attend special education related meetings
  - A majority of parents do attend those meetings
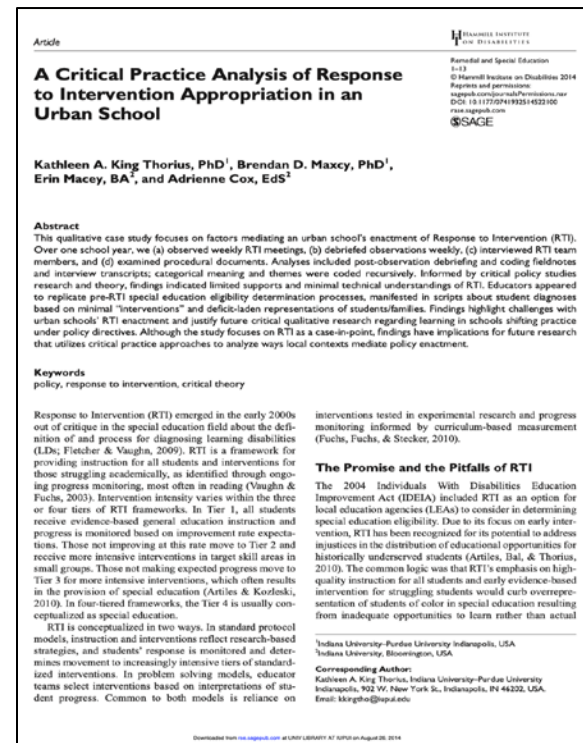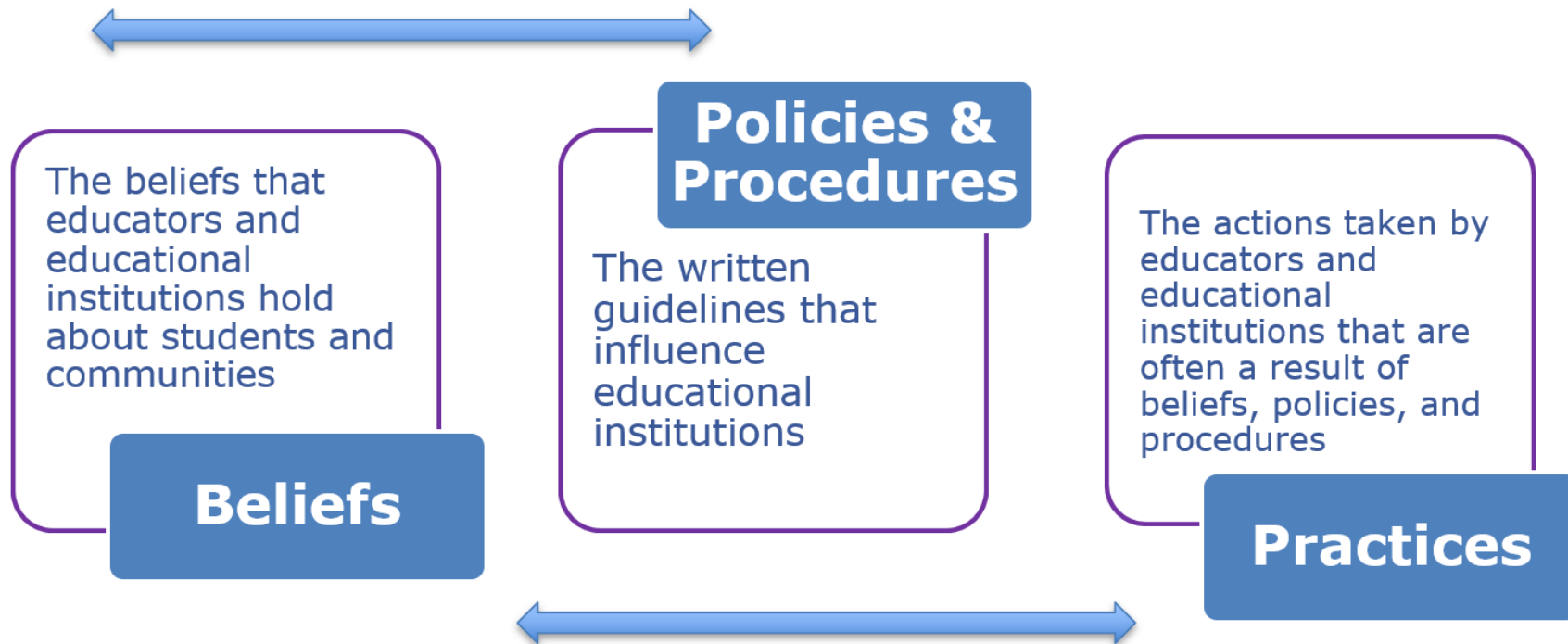

Thorius et al., 2014

Defining Terms

We want to be intentional in this session about embracing a broad definition of both the terms "family" and "community"

- "**Family**" encompasses not only parents but older siblings, grandparents, cousins, foster parents, step-parents, and both the related and unrelated aunties, uncles, and other caregivers who collectively care for children

- "**Community**" should expand beyond nonprofits, social service agencies, businesses, and churches, etc. but could include groups of people who share a racial or cultural identity, a neighborhood, or a group of children

(Ishimaru, 2020)

Factors That Influence Inequities

Beliefs

The beliefs that educators and educational institutions hold about students and communities

Policies & Procedures

The written guidelines that influence educational institutions

Practices

The actions taken by educators and educational institutions that are often a result of beliefs, policies, and procedures

A Black parent's perspective on engagement...

"Decisions in my district are made with little or no input from parents. Many times, parents are put in the position of having to object to decisions that are made because the decisions do not reflect parents' wishes or situations."

Characteristics of Engagement

- Educational systems have been shaped by the influence of White dominant culture
- Forms of engagement can be viewed as difficult, causing families, communities, and various stakeholders to feel uncomfortable or excluded during these exchanges

Characteristics of Engagement

CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGAGEMENT ROOTED IN WHITE DOMINANT CULTURE	CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGAGEMENT ROOTED IN AN INTENTIONAL EQUITY MINDSET
Power-Driven	**Shared Decision-Making**
• Those with power think they are capable of making decisions for those without power	• Those who are affected by the system are actively engaged in identifying problems and implementing solutions
• Those with power do not think it is important or necessary to understand the viewpoint or experiences of those for whom they make decisions	• Everyone involved knows and understands how decisions are made
• Those with power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done	• Ensure everyone involved knows and understands their level of responsibility and authority in decision-making
• There is a desire for individual credit and recognition	• Understand that change is inevitable and challenging those in power can be healthy and productive

Characteristics of Engagement

CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGAGEMENT ROOTED IN WHITE DOMINANT CULTURE	CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGAGEMENT ROOTED IN AN INTENTIONAL EQUITY MINDSET
Directed	**Interactive**
• Leaders chart the path, make decisions, and empower others to take action	• Leaders and stakeholders join together, build consensus, chart the path, and collectively take action
• Things are either/or, good/bad, right/wrong, with us/against us	• There is an intentional effort to include all parties involved
• Does not acknowledge a need for time and creativity to seek solutions or come up with more options	• Notice when people use 'either/or' language and challenge others to come up with more than two alternatives

Characteristics of Engagement

CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGAGEMENT ROOTED IN WHITE DOMINANT CULTURE	CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGAGEMENT ROOTED IN AN INTENTIONAL EQUITY MINDSET
Traditional	**Progressive**
• Values strong documentation and writing skills over non-traditional methods of communication • Does not take into account or value other ways information can be shared	• Take the time to analyze how people get and share information • Be open to alternative ways of communicating • Value the contributions and efforts of every person on the team • Use language free of technical terms, acronyms, and buzz words

Characteristics of Engagement

CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGAGEMENT ROOTED IN WHITE DOMINANT CULTURE	CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGAGEMENT ROOTED IN AN INTENTIONAL EQUITY MINDSET
Authoritative	**Shared Responsibility**
• Belief in solving problems alone	• Make people accountable as a group rather than as individuals
• Those in power drive decisions and carry out the work in a technical approach	• Accept that there are many ways to get to the same goal
• Belief there is only one right way to do things	• Respect the decisions that others make
• Belief that when others do not adapt or change, something is wrong with them	• Always be clear that you have something to learn
	• Never assume you know what is best

Characteristics of Engagement

CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGAGEMENT ROOTED IN WHITE DOMINANT CULTURE	CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGAGEMENT ROOTED IN AN INTENTIONAL EQUITY MINDSET
Objective	**Empathetic**
• Maintain a strong belief in objectivity or neutrality	• Understand that everyone has a worldview and that it affects the way they understand things
• Belief that emotions are inherently destructive and irrational, and should not play a role in decision-making	• Sit with discomfort when people express themselves in ways that are unfamiliar
• Invalidate people who show emotion	• Assume that everyone has a valid point, and it is your job to understand what that point is
• Ignore or invalidate those who do not think in a linear manner	

Chat Box

On a scale of 1 to 5, with:
1 = characteristics of White dominant culture
and
5 = characteristics of equity mindset

how would you characterize how your organization currently engages with families and stakeholders?

![NCSI - national center for systemic improvement]

Panel Discussion

Discussion Starters:

- How can education systems create opportunities for authentic family, community, and stakeholder engagement?

- Why is illustrating the relationship between White dominant culture and traditional approaches to family, community, and stakeholder engagement important?

Policies to Engage Stakeholders and Families

Family and Stakeholder Engagement in ESSA

- Meaningfully involve parents and stakeholders in developing and updating state, district and school plans and parent and family engagement policies;
- Build the capacity of families; and
- Identify and address barriers

ESSA: Every Student Succeeds Act

Family & Stakeholder Engagement Policy in IDEA

- **Indicator 8:** Schools facilitate **parent involvement** as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities
- **Indicator 14:** Students' post-school outcomes. Are respondents representative of the racial/ethnic makeup of the district's students?
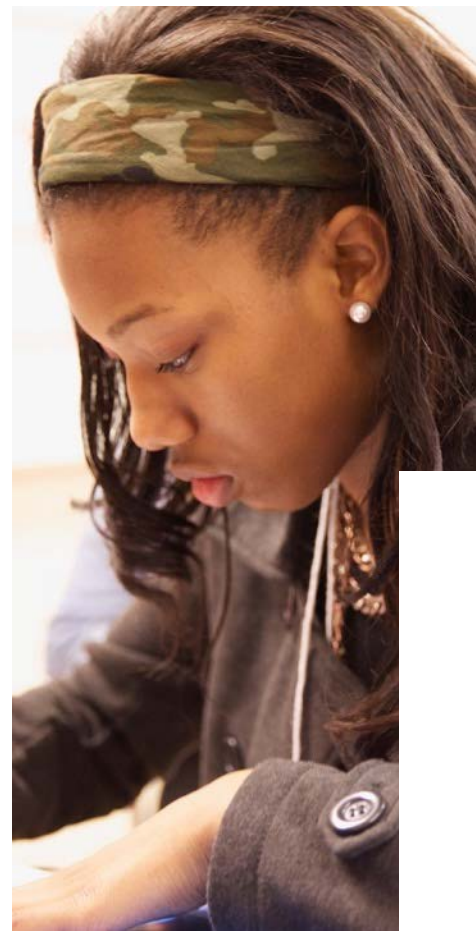
Family & Stakeholder Engagement in IDEA

Engagement of Black families and communities in state accountability decision-making and reporting in:

- State Performance Plans (SPP)
- Annual Performance Reporting (APR)
- State Systemic Improvement Plans (SSIP)

A Black student's perspective on learning conditions and outcomes...

"I would say be more cautious when it comes to Black students because in America right now, we are fighting for the injustices we face. Be sure to keep us equal to the rest and not feel separated in a group. For Black students with disabilities, make sure we can access the same resources for our disability as the next non-Black student."

Panel Discussion Continued

Discussion Starters (2):

- What policies at the local and state levels can support more frequent, meaningful and authentic engagement of families, communities, and stakeholders?

- What policies at the local and state levels can present barriers to this goal or hinder authentic family, community, and stakeholder engagement?

Looking Ahead

Upcoming Thought
Leader Conversations

Future Thought Leader Conversation Series
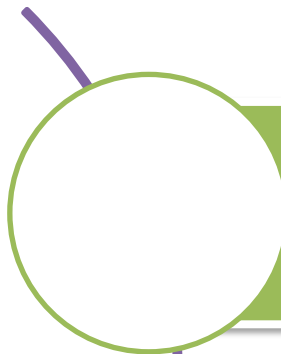
Research-Informed Practice
May 18, 2021 — 3:30-5:00 p.m. ET

Systems Coherence
July 13, 2021 — 3:30-5:00 p.m. ET

Where to Find TLC Information

- Materials, including the PowerPoint and recording from today's session, will be posted to the NCSI website under "Resources": https://ncsi.wested.org/resources/pursuing-equity/

- Registration information for future sessions will be posted to our homepage at ncsi.wested.org

- Please sign up for our mailing list to receive emails about future TLC sessions and registration details: ncsi@wested.org

Session Evaluation

- We appreciate your feedback on our session today so we can continuously improve

- Link to the evaluation is in the chat box and will also be emailed to today's participants

With Gratitude...

Thank you to our **Thought Leaders** for initiating and framing this important conversation

Thanks to **each of you** for your commitment to creating inclusive, equitable systems that support all students to succeed and thrive

Thank you for your commitment to making systemic change for equity
Questions can be sent to ncsi@wested.org

IDEAs that Work
Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education

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