

Creating culturally responsive schools

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Creating successful schools requires a balance between technical and adaptive work

- Technical work - A focus on managing the operations of the system, insuring that procedures are working and that employees are *in compliance* with policy.
- Adaptive work - A focus on *the dynamic and complex* nature of the work, its substance, meaning and purpose. Work guided by a long term vision, with medium and short term goals. An awareness that we are trying to achieve our goals in a constantly changing environment
 - Ron Hieftz - Leadership on the Line

Key Adaptive Challenge:

What does it take to educate the student you serve?

- Key Questions:
 - What are their needs? - academic and social/emotional
 - What are their strengths and interests?
 - What challenges confront them and their families?
 - What are their hopes and dreams?
 - How do they learn? In or outside of school?

Studying hermit crabs in Baltimore



Reflection:

- How are race, language and socio-economic status implicated in patterns of achievement and discipline at your school?
 - How predictable are the patterns?
- How does your staff understand the causes of under-achievement? Do they blame kids or parents?
- Does your school culture promote collaboration, positive relationships, student empowerment and responsibility?

I. Creating Culturally Responsive Schools Requires a Critical Understanding of race and culture

- Culture - the system of ideas that enable us to make meaning of the social world (Horowitz, Rosaldo)
 - Customs and artifacts are symbols of culture – food, dress, music, etc.
- Race – social construct rooted in historical notions of group membership
 - Toni Morrison: profoundly important and meaningless
- We learn through shared cultural understandings
 - Vygotsky - zone of proximal development
 - Teaching is a cultural transaction (Boykin)

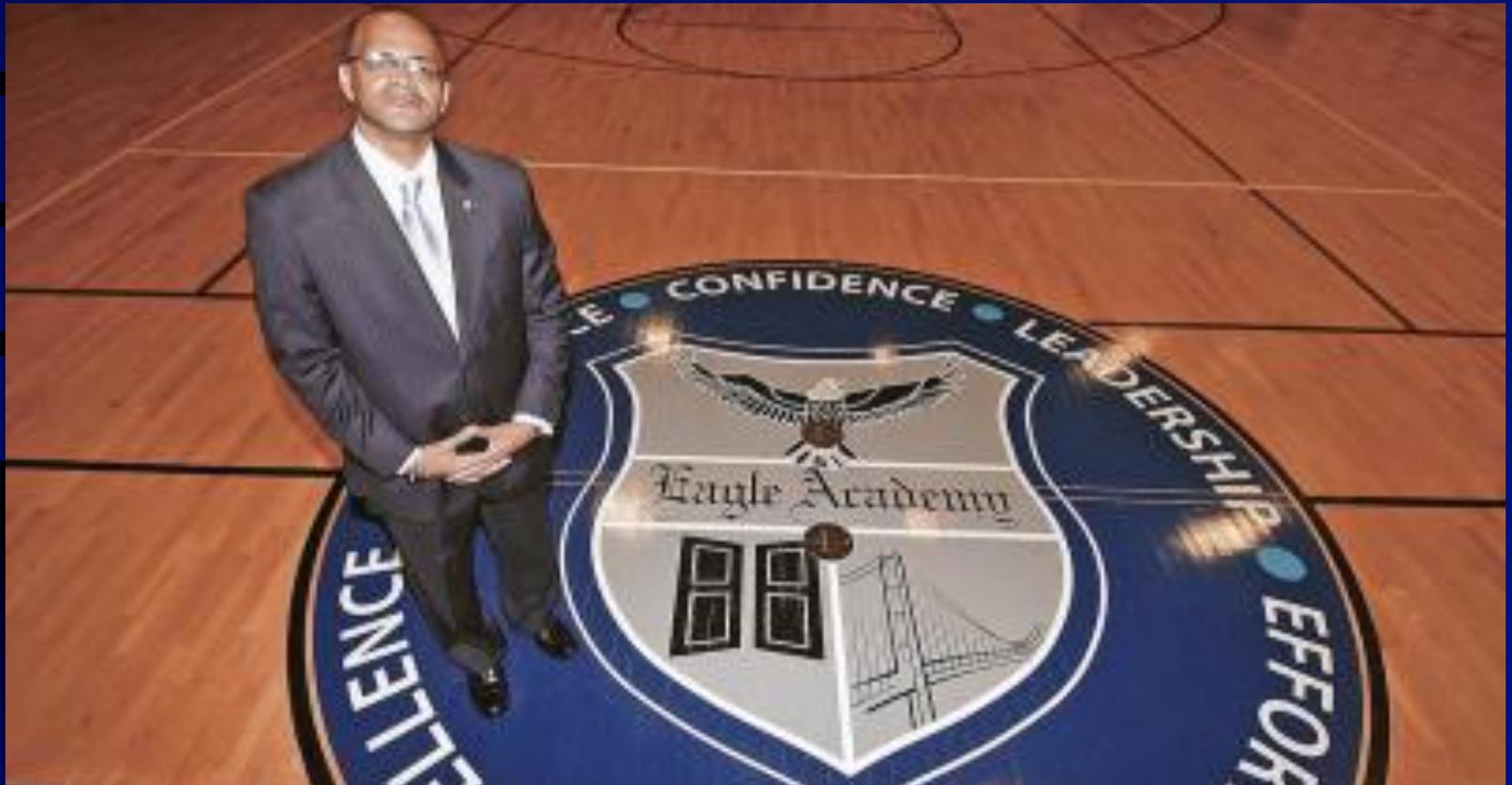
Why educating across cultural differences is often a challenge

- Ethnocentrism/bias
- Cultural differences often contribute to challenges in communication and cohesion
- Teachers who have an inability to transcend cultural differences often experience more behavior problems with their students
 - “Color blindness”
 - Too much emphasis on cultural assimilation instead of empowerment

Confronting stereotypes

- Race, gender and national origin stereotypes often undermine student performance
 - Steele and Aronson: stereotype threats
- Added burden: Students who are not members of the dominant group must become bi-cultural to succeed
 - Delpitt: Learning the codes of power
 - Assimilating can be stressful for students
- Successful schools are inclusive and make it possible for students to move beyond stereotypes
 - “Acting White” is not an issue, no trade off
 - Perry, Hilliard and Steele - Young, Gifted and Black

David Banks – Founder of Eagle Academy



Excellence for Boys, Brooklyn



Extended Learning at Eagle Academy



Engaged learners at Eagle: don't crush the energy, channel it



Every boy learns to play violin



II. Creating powerful school cultures

- Defined: Beliefs, attitudes, norms, expectations and assumptions that guide actions
 - Ethos - the character, customs, habits that distinguish a school/community
- Sarason's axiom: If you attempt to implement reforms but fail to change the culture of a school, nothing will change
- Highly successful schools are distinguished by a culture that reinforces core values and promotes intellectual development

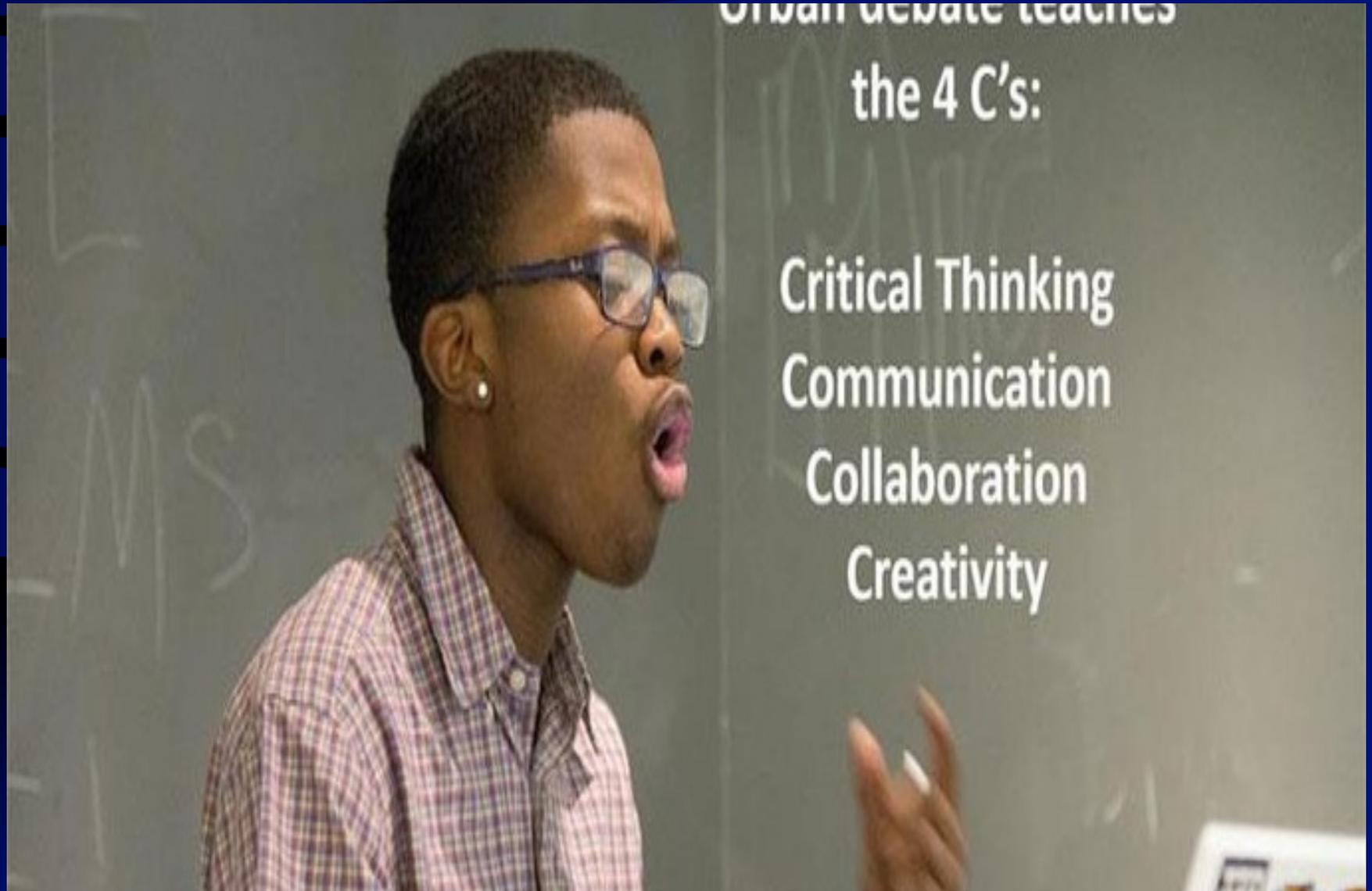
Signs of a healthy school culture:

- Staff takes responsibility for student achievement
 - See teaching and learning connected
- Barriers to opportunity are eliminated
- Staff collaborates and is open to change
- School rules and procedures are aligned with educational goals
 - Discipline is rooted in values, focus is on character, ethics and changing behavior

Normative patterns among students reinforce academic achievement

- Students think it's cool to be smart
- Strong relationships between staff and students
- Extra curricular activities are used to build relationships and character
- Disruption and defiance from students is rare
 - Many adults with moral authority

Debate and leadership in Oakland



Reflection:

- How would you characterize the culture of your school?
 - Do your students think its cool to be smart?
 - Does your staff collaborate? Do they take responsibility for student learning outcomes?
 - Do you have adults on staff with moral authority?

III. Improving Schools Requires Strong Relationships With Parents

- Based on a recognition of mutual need, responsibility and respect
- Based on the recognition that all parents can help their children
- Based on understanding and empathy for the situation confronting parents and families
- Partnerships must be rooted in trust – do they know we care about their kids?

Cultural competence

- Defined: The ability to work effectively as a professional across race, class, linguistic and cultural differences. The ability to establish trust and rapport based on relationships premised on respect and empathy.
- Schools need personnel who can communicate effectively with parents - language and cultural skills
- Are We Ready for Parental Involvement?

IV. Transform school cultures from the classroom

- Positive relationships between students and teachers can reduce disparities in outcomes:
 - **Empathy** - Teacher sensitivity to a student's needs e.g. mood, interests, challenges etc.
 - **Interest** - Teacher interest in knowing and understanding their students
 - **Community** – creating a positive classroom environment
 - **Firm and clear** - Teacher deployment of classroom management marked by clear yet flexible expectations and behavioral guidelines.

What is culturally responsive teaching?

Complex: The ability to teach effectively across race, class, language and cultural differences - combination of skill and art

- Art: The ability to draw upon the culture of your students to make the curriculum and learning relevant
- Skill: requires the acquisition of pedagogical skills in planning, organization and delivery
- Intellectual rather than technical work
 - Content knowledge
 - Pedagogical skill
 - Relationship building

Culturally responsive teaching at Hollenbeck Middle School: Students in control of learning



Focus on Engagement

- Behavioral Engagement
 - Preparation
 - Persistence
 - Instrumental Help-seeking
- Cognitive Engagement
 - Deep Processing
 - Meta-cognition
- Affective Engagement
 - Interest
 - Value

Cultivate Agency:

Influence the choices that are made by students

- Educate students about their history and culture
- Provide opportunities for students to become involved in community service and leadership
 - Utilize community-centered problem-posing curriculum
- Channel the energy, don't crush it
 - Sports, music, art
- Listen: provide students with opportunities to have input on what is happening in their schools