Building the Capacity of Schools to Meet Student Needs
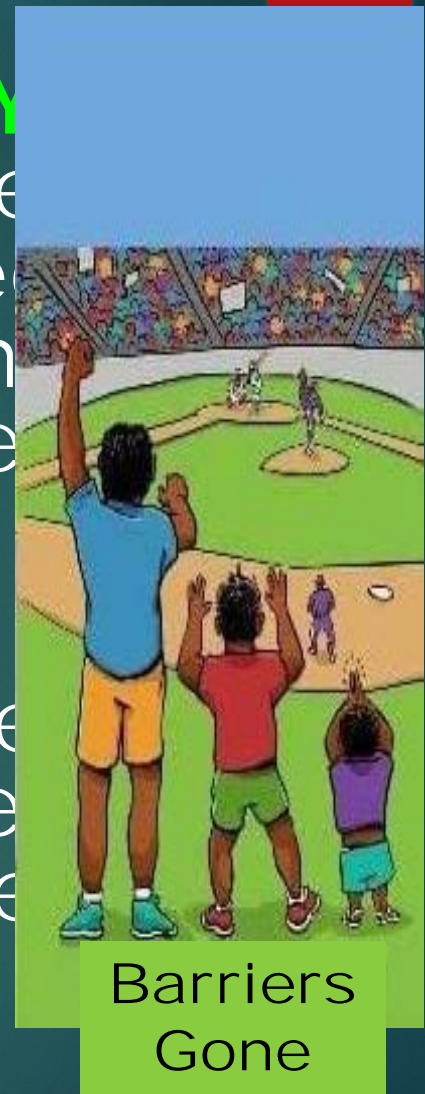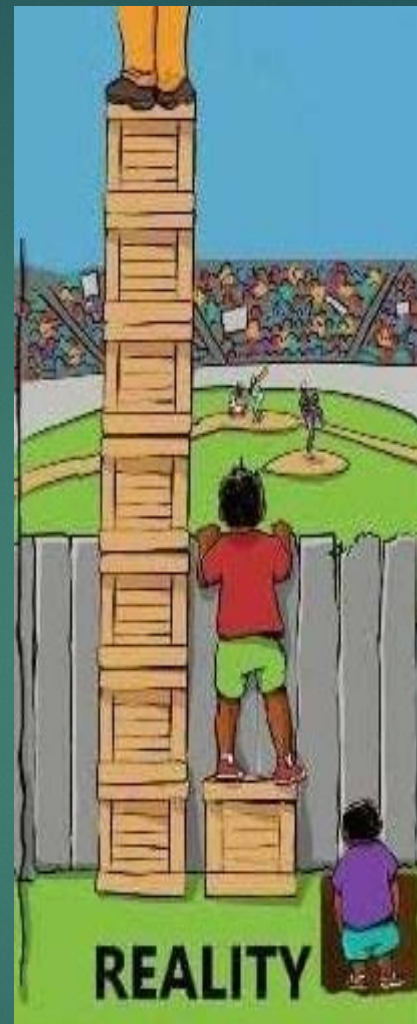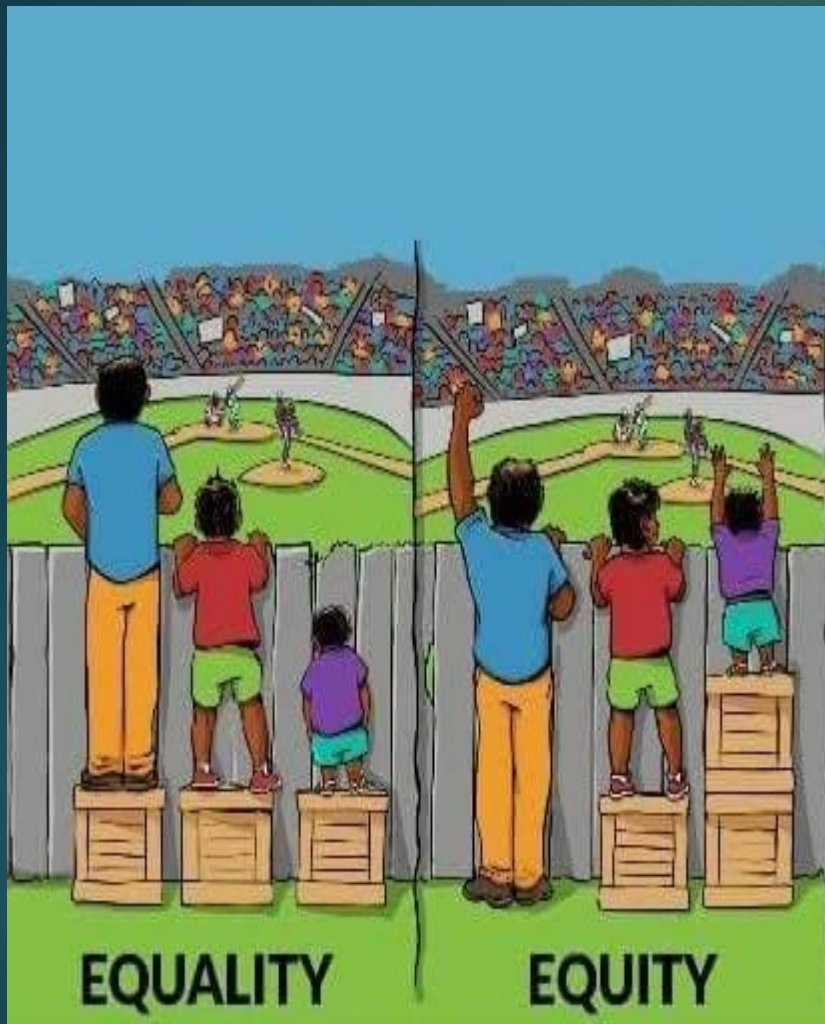
PEDRO A. NOGUERA, PH.D.

CENTER FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF SCHOOLS

UCLA

EQUALITY   EQUITY   REALITY   **Barriers Gone**

The goal should be to eliminate barriers to learning for ALL students

I. Implementing an equity agenda

▶ Equity is: Giving students what they need to be successful

  ▶ *Acknowledging* and addressing differences and needs of students

  ▶ *Addressing* academic, social and psychological needs that arise from inequality in society

 ▶ A *commitment to fairness* in treatment – educational leaders must be the guardians and advocates for equity.

The pursuit of equity requires identifying and eliminating common barriers

- Common barriers:
  - **COMPLACENCY – tradition, inertia of the status quo**
  - Poverty – unmet social and emotional needs
  - Lack of professional capacity
  - Lack of resources
  - Racial/language/culture bias – institutional and interpersonal
- **An equity agenda must be focused on outcomes – academic and developmental**

Equity is not:

- Lowering standards or expectations
- Making excuses due to poverty or race
- An issue only schools serving poor children of color should be concerned about
- Choosing which students to serve – disadvantaged or affluent

The greatest obstacle to equity is the status quo: Three Horizons of Change

Transformation

Innovation within The system

The schools we have
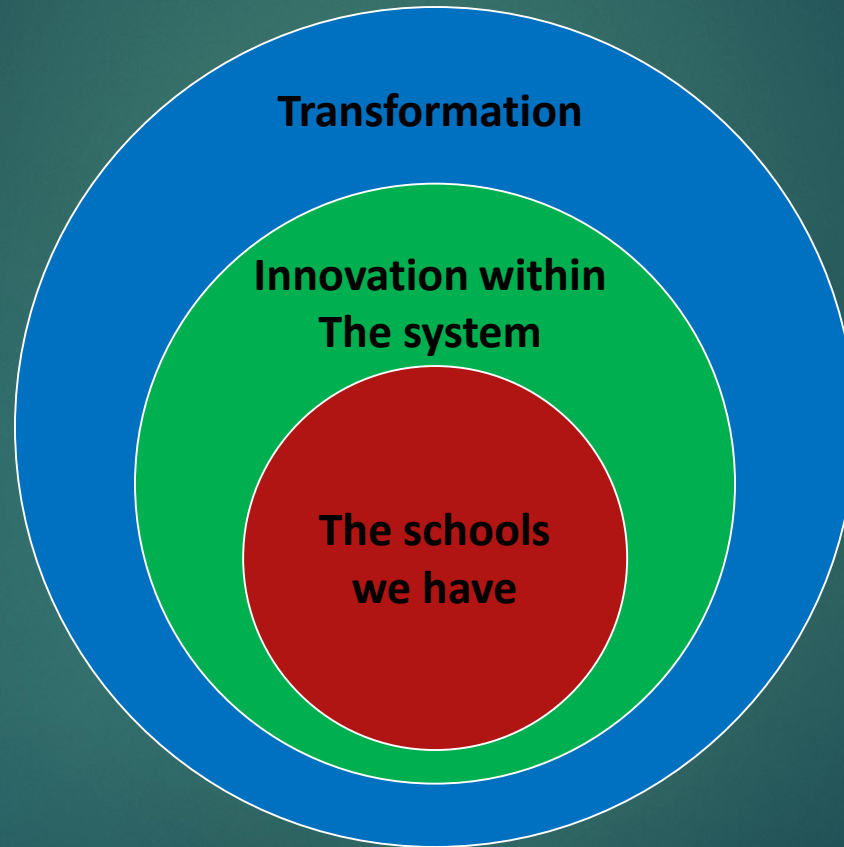
An Equity Agenda Can Rely Upon the Five Essential Ingredients as a guide for School Improvement

Organizing Schools for Improvement, 2010 – Bryke, et.al.

1) A coherent instructional guidance system
2) Development of the professional capacity of staff
3) Strong parent-community-school ties
4) A student-centered learning climate
5) Shared leadership to drive change

Capacity Building Advances Equity

- A process designed to ensure that the **skills of your staff match the needs of your students**
  - Tailored, *differentiated professional development*
  - Developing *strategic partnerships* to address social needs of students
- *Collaborative problem solving* between SOE and districts, and between schools and central office
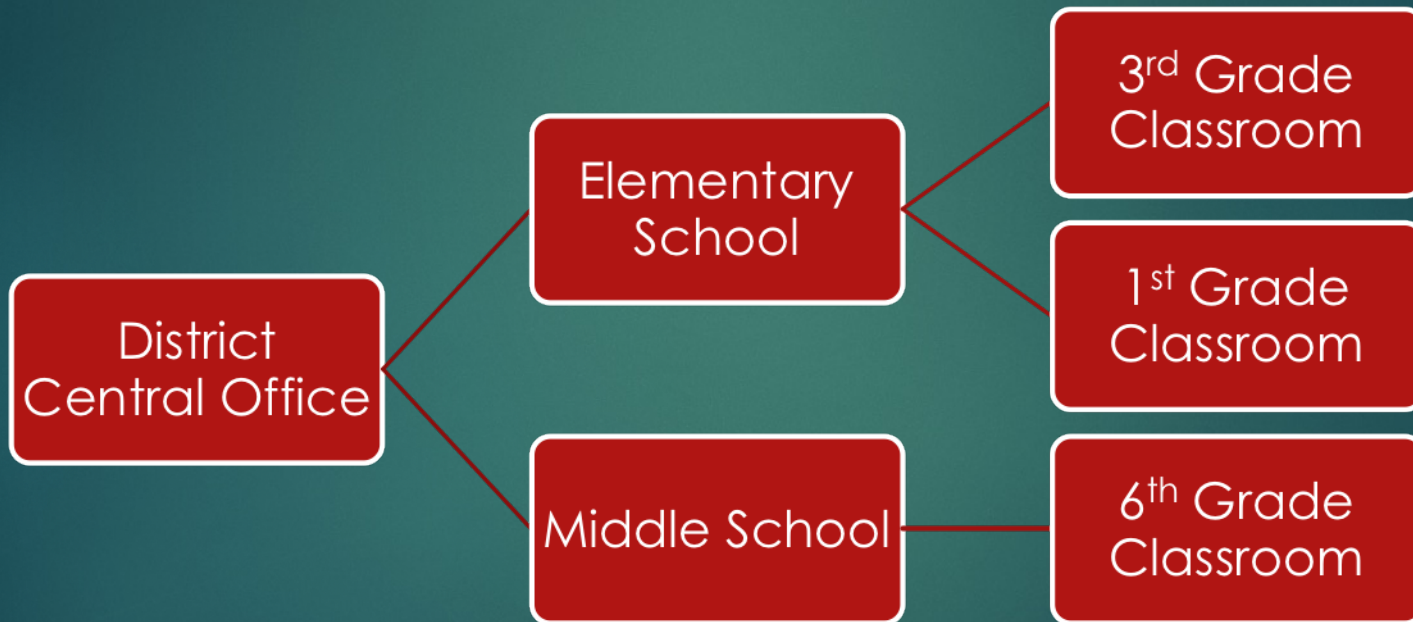
Areas where transformation/capacity building is typically needed

▶ Whole child focus: schools often lack vision or capacity to address non-academic needs (e.g. health, nutrition, SEL, etc.)

▶ District central office: from command control to service

  ▶ Collaborative problem solving

  ▶ Data analysis to support capacity building

▶ Need for cultural competence among staff

▶ From structural to cultural change: Discipline, staff empowerment, student motivation, etc.

Be careful about how you use data

- Ineffective Uses
- Ranking kids and schools
- Value-added measures for teachers
- Confusing symptoms and causes

- Smart Uses of Data
- Diagnose learning needs
- Identify areas where support is needed – item analysis
- Early interventions
- Identifying positive deviance

Learning from Success:

▶ **References:**

▶ It's Being Done and How It's Being Done - Karin Chenowith

▶ Dispelling the Myth: High Performing High Poverty Schools – Ed Trust

▶ Coherence – Michael Fullan

▶ Excellence Through Equity – Blankstein and Noguera

Capacity Building and Transformation at SJHHS

- ▶ Community building
- ▶ Data-based decision making
- ▶ School-community partnerships
- ▶ Teacher empowerment
- ▶ Students evaluate teachers
- ▶ **Results: 4th highest grad rate in LA, 95% college enrollment, no fights in 6 years**

Brockton scholarship winners 2016

Key Elements of the Brockton Strategy

- Shared leadership

- Concerted effort to obtain buy-in around the strategy

- A coherent strategy focused on student needs

- Differentiated professional development

- Follow through, examining the evidence, sticking with it

Key Questions in Brockton

- *What are we teaching, how are we teaching it, and how do we know the students are actually learning it?*

- *What do our students need to know and be able to do to be successful on the MCAS, in their classes, and in their lives beyond school?*

- *What resources do we have now that we can use more effectively?*

- *What can we control, and what can't we control?*

Turn Around at Brockton High

- *"Brockton High School has every excuse for failure, serving a city plagued by crime, poverty, housing foreclosures, and homelessness… But Brockton High, by far the state's largest public high school with 4,200 students, has found success in recent years that has eluded many of the state's urban schools: MCAS scores are soaring, earning the school state recognition as a symbol of urban hope."*
- James Vaznis, Boston Globe Oct 9, 2009.

Closing the Gap in Abington, PA

▶ Elements of the strategy

▶ Access to and support in advanced courses

▶ Data-based decision making – what's working, what's not?

▶ Focus on getting interventions right

▶ Continuous professional development

▶ Engaging students through extra curricular activities and electives

District leadership in Abington

- Collaborative problem solving (not pressure) with principals

- Leadership development through mentorship

- Embracing an equity vision with support from school board (moving beyond zero-sum scenarios)

  - De-tracking, expanded access to advanced courses

Incremental Progress

GRADE 8 PSSA DATA
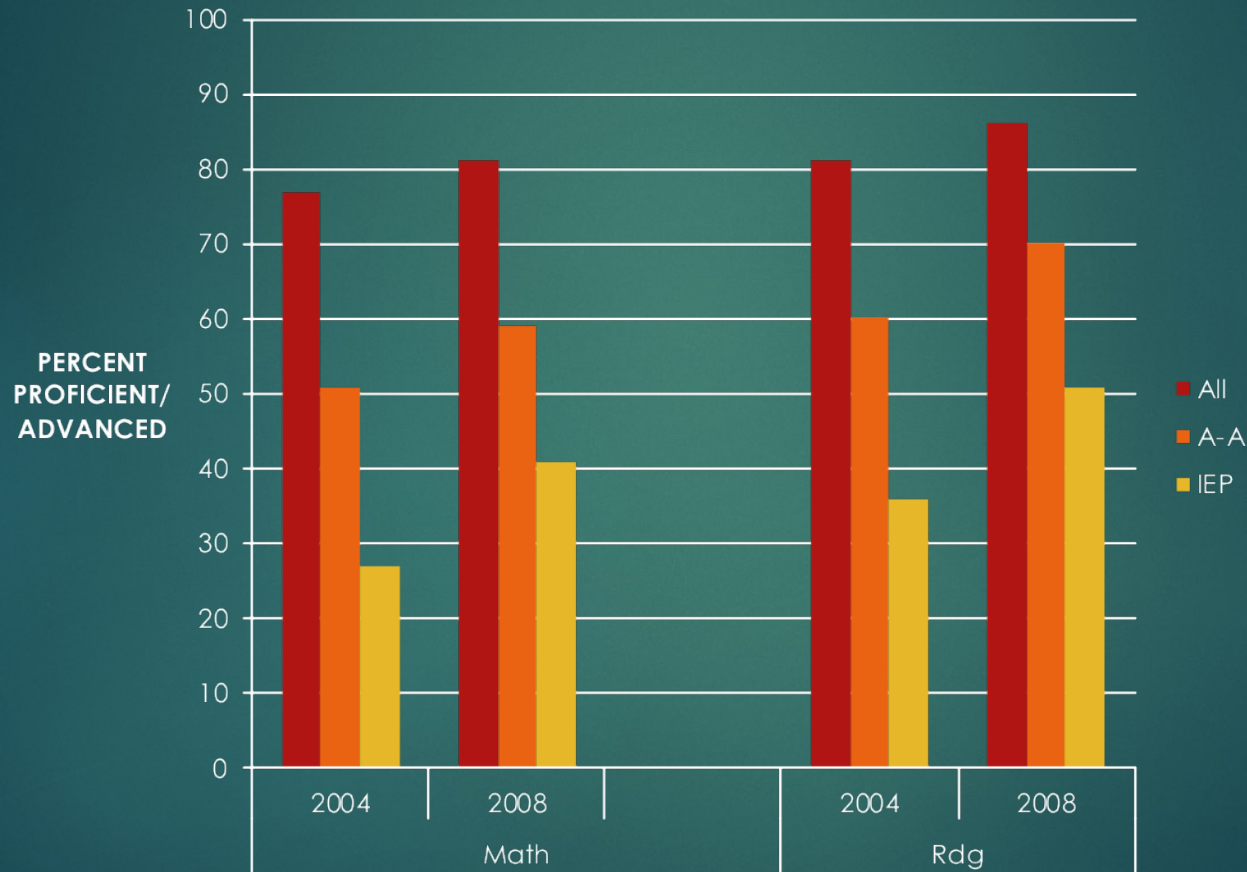
Success through coherence in Toronto

- Targeted Capacity Building: Funding for additional staff to lead the implementation of programs to keep students on track to graduate on time.

- Trust: Deploying skilled staff to work with schools in need

- Coherence: Working with school and district staff to ensure that strategies are aligned with goals.

- From competition to collaboration: Creating systems to make it possible for schools to learn from each other.

Using Money Effectively

▶ When new money was available districts targeted high yield areas:

  ▶ Specialist and coaches in weak subjects (9th grade math)

  ▶ Targeted intervention programs

  ▶ School Improvement Teams

  ▶ Summer Learning Programs,

• These investments created an *interaction effect* between investment in potential high yield strategies, and collaborative cultures that make the difference.

II. Implementing an equity agenda: Research Shows What Works

- ▶ Assign students who are behind academically to effective teachers

- ▶ Provide access to rigorous courses and increase academic support
  AVID, double period classes, reduced emphasis on homework

- ▶ Develop early intervention systems to identify struggling students

- ▶ Provide extended learning time - after school (but not more of the same) and summer school

More of What Works

- Use extra curricular activities to build relationships and engage students in school

- Create advisories for all students

- Implement a discipline plan that promotes character, moral development and clear educational goals

- Quality preschool and afterschool

- Develop a school year plan for parental involvement

Finding the 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 Hiefitz - Leadership on the Line

Key Adaptive Questions:

▶ What knowledge, skills and resources are needed to educate the children you serve?

   ▶ How do they learn at home?

   ▶ How do they use literacy and math?

   ▶ What are their interests?

   ▶ What challenges do they and their parents face?

   ▶ What are their unmet needs that may impact learning?

   ▶ What are their dreams and aspirations?

# Equity drivers make it possible to implement the 5 essentials

- 5 Essentials
  - A coherent instructional guidance system
  - Development of the professional capacity of staff
  - Strong parent-community-school ties
  - A student-centered learning climate
  - Shared leadership to drive change
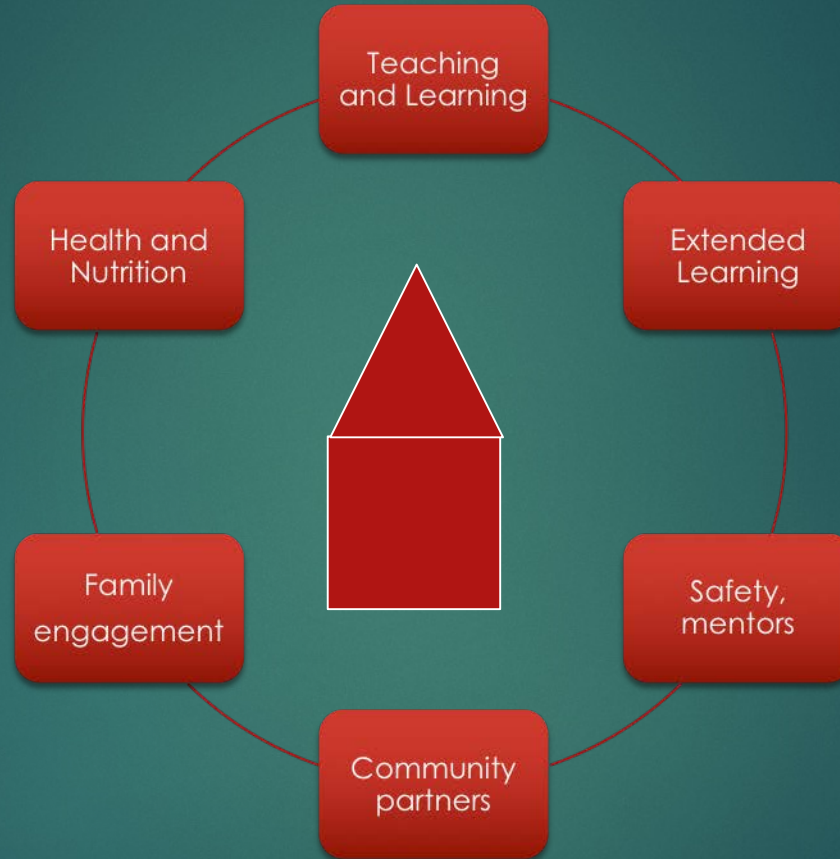
- Equity Drivers
  - Strong PLCs
  - Differentiated PD
  - Community schools
  - SEL, staff morale, community building
  - Trust rooted in common vision

Social and emotional learning as a driver for equity
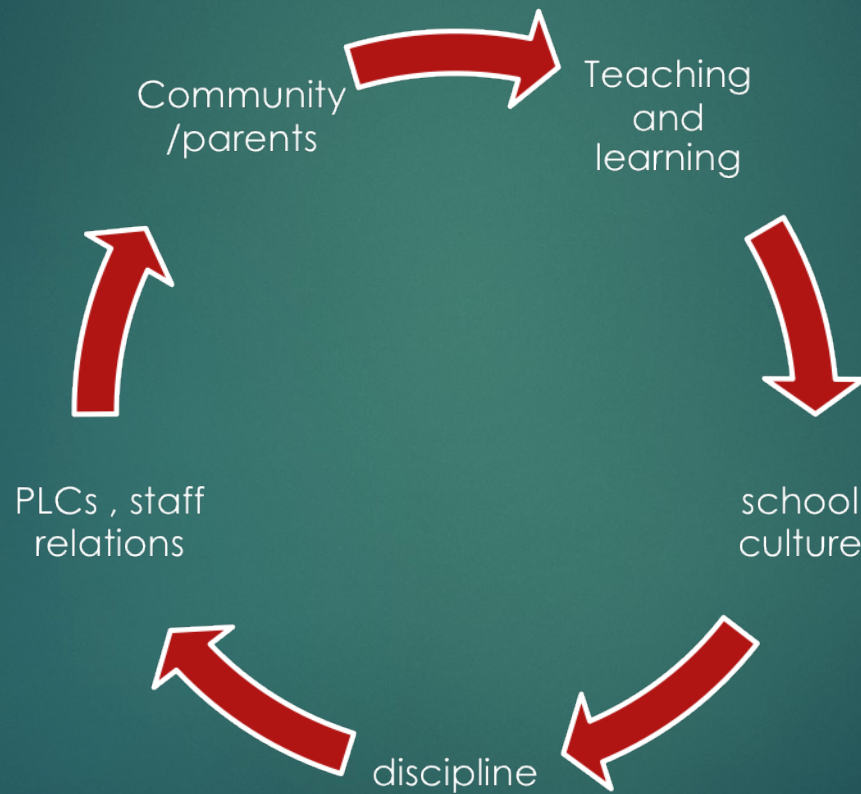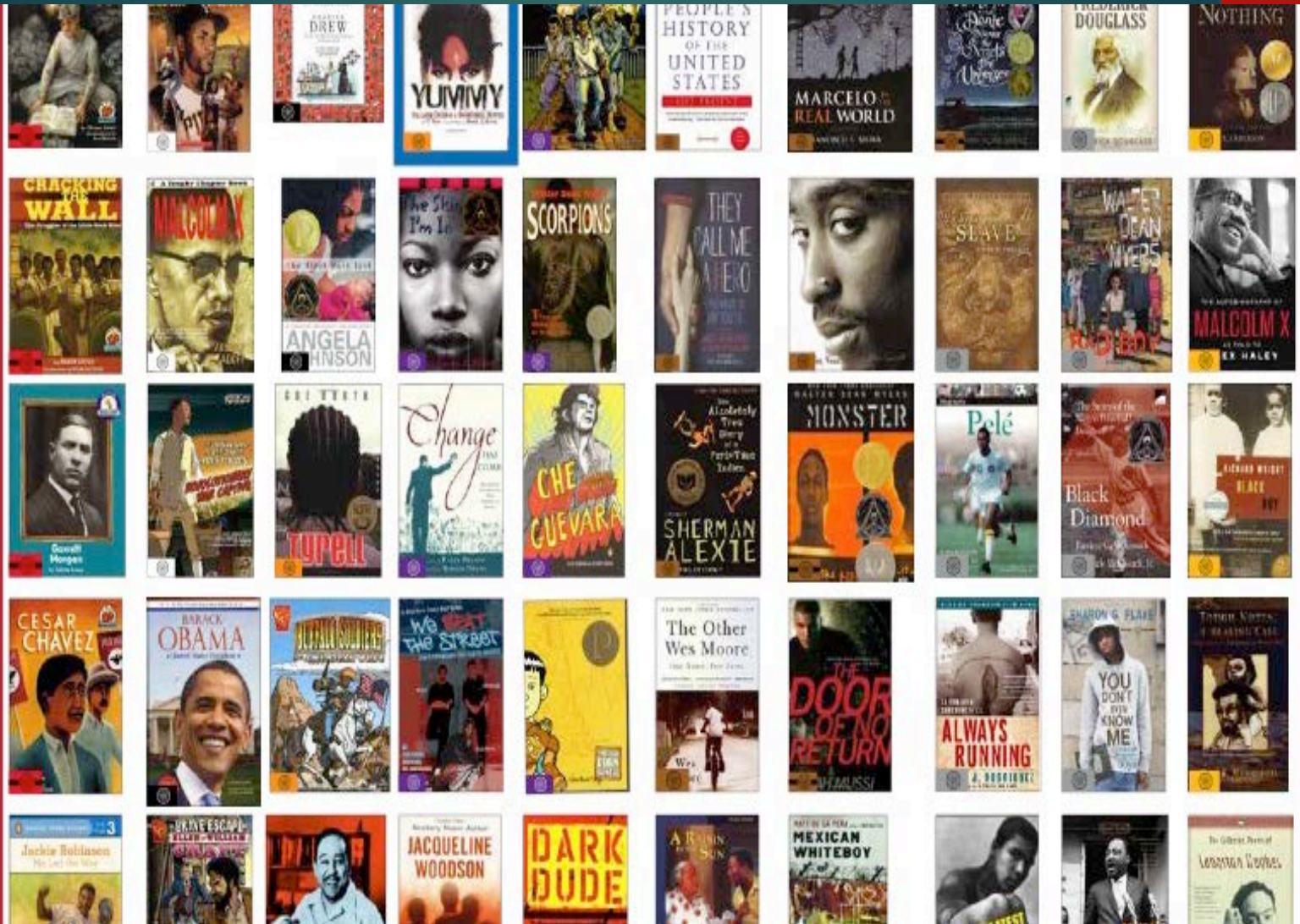
Building School Capacity

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