



SYMPOSIUM BREAKOUT SESSION
MONDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2022 | 12:00-1:00 PM ET

Awareness is Key: Why All Change Efforts Should Start Here

PRESENTER:

- Stephanie Garcia, Highlander Institute



Welcome!



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HIGHLANDER
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Leveling the Field for All Learners

Opener

With your small group, please share:

- Your name, role, & school/organization
- A book, movie, play, or TV show from your K-12 experience that was EITHER:
 - **A window** offering a view of a world/experience/identity different from your own
 - **A mirror** reflecting back part of your own identity
- Be sure to mention at least 1 component from the Identity Wheel visual (left) that aligns to your choice.



DIVERSITY IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2018

Percentage of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds based on the 2018 publishing statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison:
ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp



Illustration by David Huyck, in consultation with Sarah Park Dahlen
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The CCBC inventory includes 3,134 books published in 2018. This graphic would not have been possible without the statistics compiled by the CCBC, and the review and feedback we received from Edith Campbell, Molly Beth Griffin, K. T. Horning, Debbie Reese, Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, and Madeline Tyner. Many thanks.



Session Description

Personalization practices in isolation can shift instruction, but often will not sufficiently empower all students.

At Highlander Institute, we realized our school change efforts must start by acknowledging systemic inequity in order to be successful.

Join us to hear how professional learning centered on sociocultural awareness can cultivate more nuanced understanding of students and families; confront personal bias; and move us beyond the limited scope of who school is best designed to serve.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the theory of change behind Highlander Institute's **Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Pedagogy Framework**
- Define sociocultural awareness and learn how this concept informs teacher expectations for who is carrying the cognitive load in the classroom
- Hear a success story about the impact of the Awareness domain on relationships & experiences with students

OUR JOURNEY

Since 2012, our theory of change has evolved in response to ongoing research and lessons we've learned from the field.

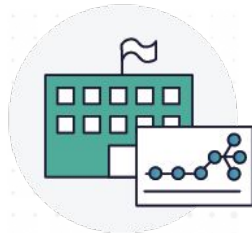
From 2012 - 2018 our focus was on leveraging technology & innovation to change classroom design and learning experiences for students. Through blended learning, we focused on the interplay between data, software, and face-to-face instruction. Through personalized learning, we leveraged online and offline strategies to meet students at their own zone of proximal development, allow them to progress at their own pace, and have voice, choice, and agency in their learning.



Blended Learning



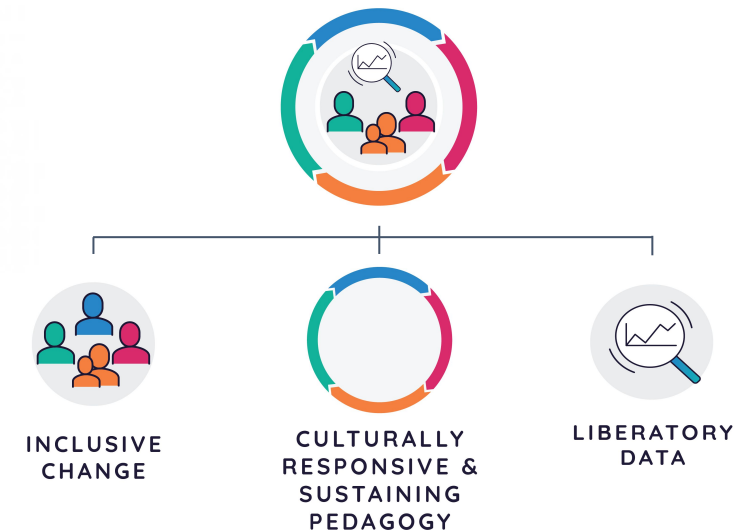
Personalized Instruction



Change Management

In 2018, we reflected on the ways our classroom redesigns were not meeting the needs of all students so, with deeper research around learning science and with support from national experts like Zaretta Hammond, we redefined personalization around [Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Pedagogy](#)

Culturally Responsive School Change Model





Our Mission

Highlander Institute partners with communities to imagine and create more equitable, relevant and effective schools. Using research, we convene, coach and build capacity to improve outcomes and experiences for all students.

Our Vision

Students, educators and communities partnering as agents of change to design:

Classrooms that empower

Schools that adapt

Systems that liberate



THE PROBLEM

Our current education system breeds compliance which results in dependent thinking and an atmosphere of low expectations — particularly for marginalized students. Without an **awareness of how systems of inequity and learner identity connect to teacher expectations**, implementing innovative practices will not sufficiently empower all students.

THE SOLUTION

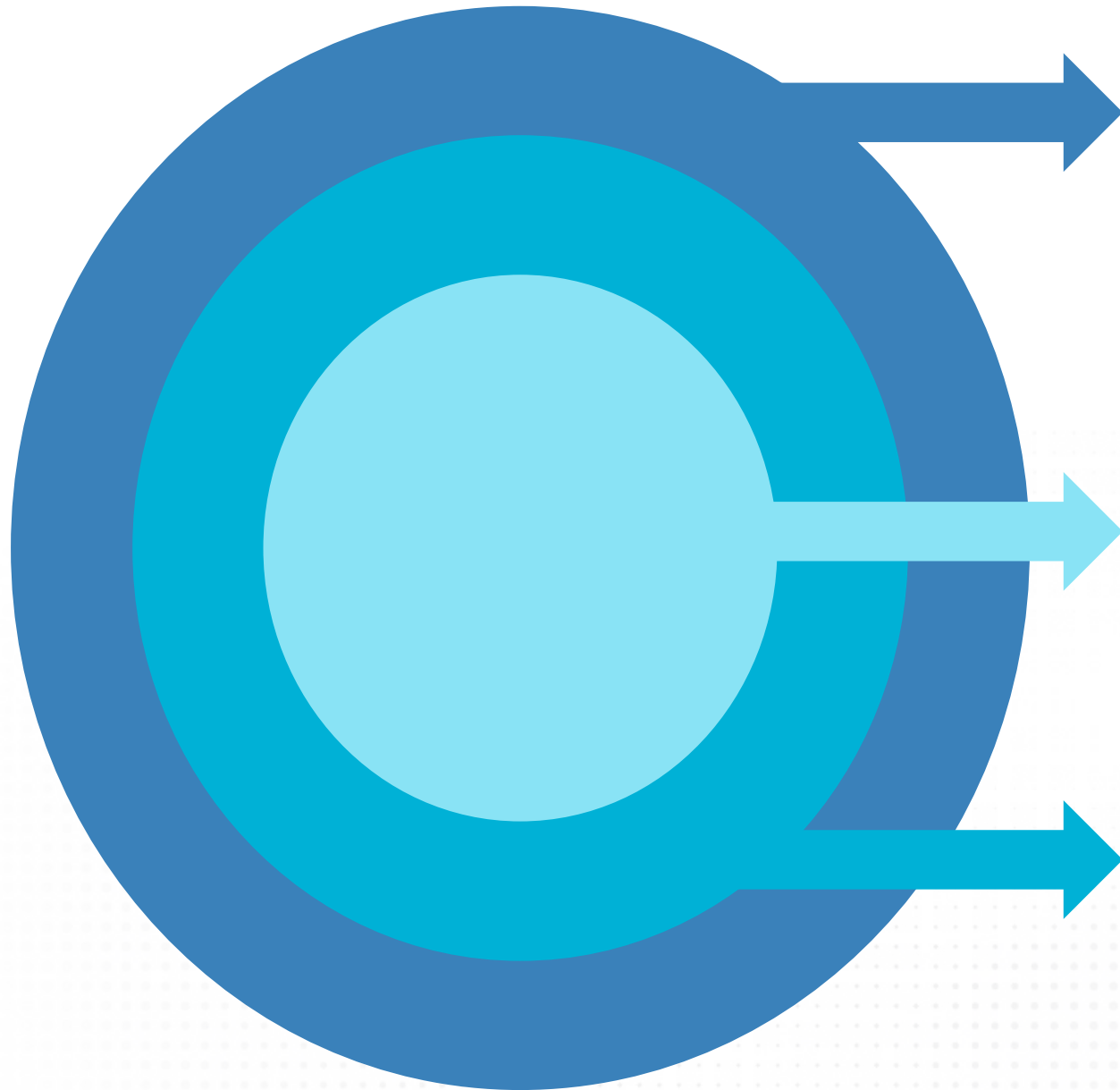
The CRSP Framework brings powerful teaching to students who have been marginalized by systemic inequity, restoring and elevating their natural confidence and competence.

IF WE

- **Build awareness of how systemic inequity translates into our schools;**
- Learn about our students' cultures, identities, and interests as we develop a sense of trust and belonging; and
- Nurture cultures of thinking by developing academic mindsets

THEN

- Students' cognitive skills, mastery, competence, and engagement will improve;
- Students' self-efficacy and confidence will increase; and
- Students will feel empowered to use their skills in meaningful ways.



Sphere of concern

Everything you are concerned with or care about, regardless of your power of control

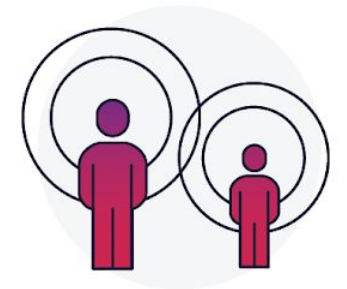
Sphere of control

Everything you can directly control.
Control = Awareness + Choice

Sphere of influence

Everything you can influence outside of your direct control (via relationships, networks, etc)

Sociocultural Awareness



AWARENESS

Definition: Sociocultural Awareness

A recognition that each of us has worldviews and ways of being that are influenced by culture and the contexts in which we're situated. Our worldview is personal — it is not universal.

When we understand our students' cultures and the contexts in which they are situated, we can build upon this to make learning more meaningful.



AWARENESS

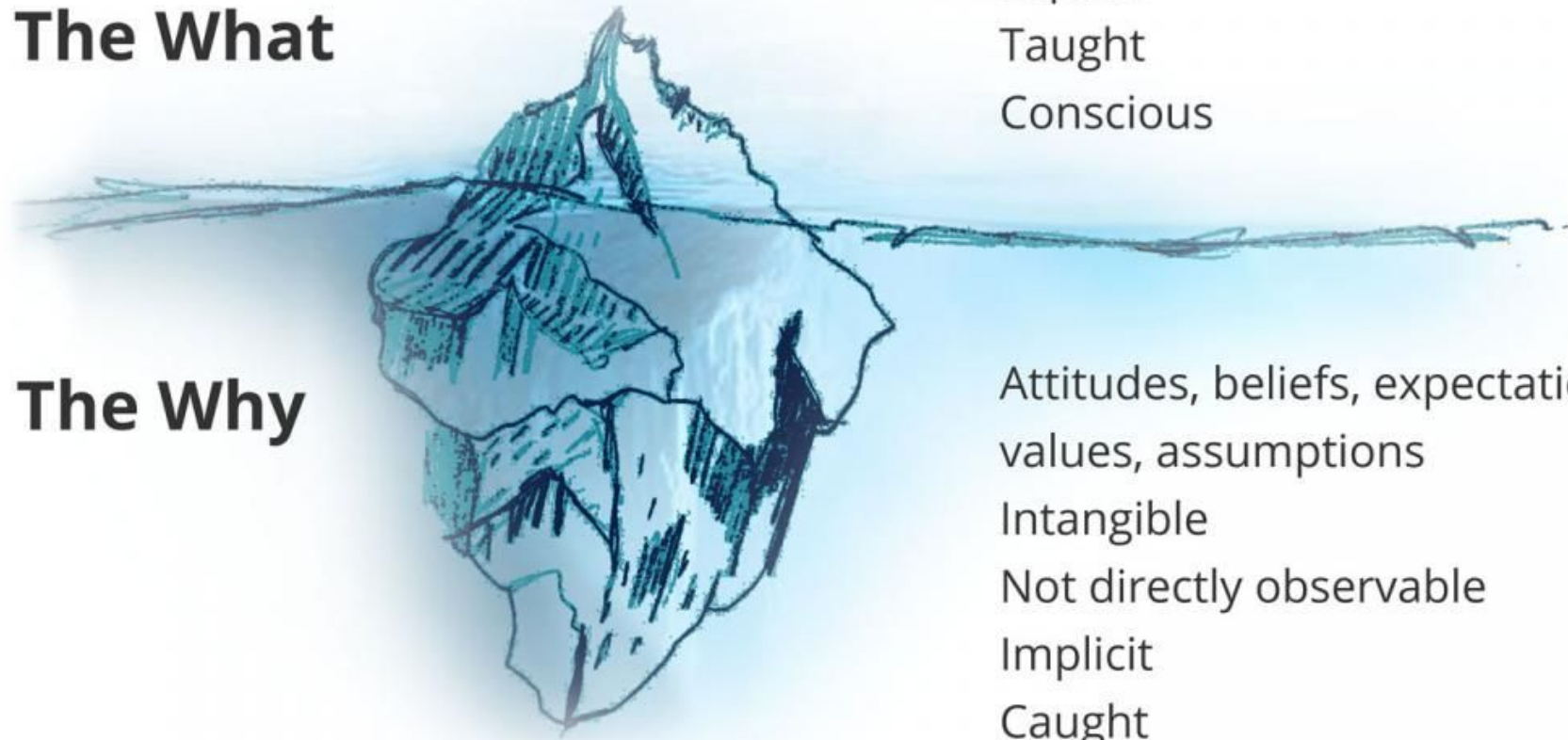
The Cultural Iceberg

The What

Behaviours and artifacts
Accessible to the senses
Observable
Explicit
Taught
Conscious

The Why

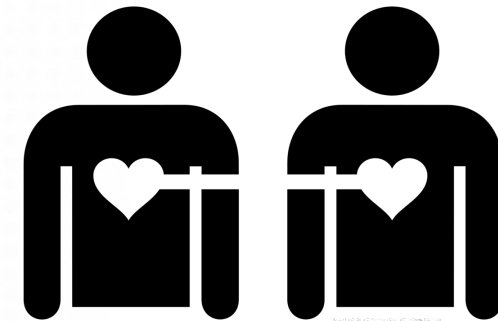
Attitudes, beliefs, expectations,
values, assumptions
Intangible
Not directly observable
Implicit
Caught
Subconscious



Are rules set in stone or does context matter?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

← Universalism vs. Particularism →

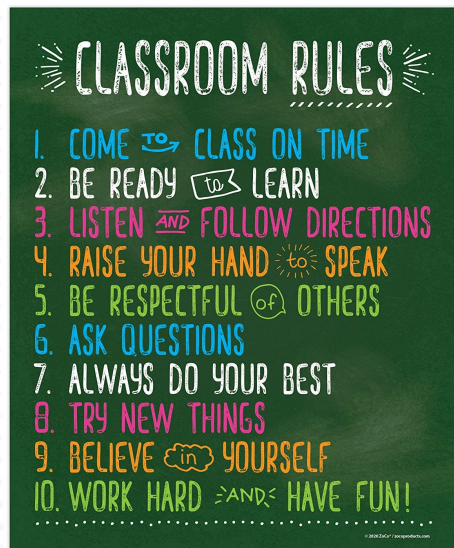


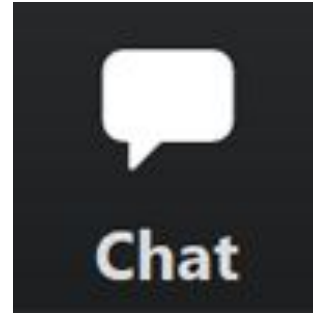


Are rules set in stone or does context matter?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

← Universalism vs. Particularism →





How do you see this play out in your context/role?

Use the chat or unmute to share



AWARENESS

How does this impact the teaching role?

Sociocultural awareness helps educators see how their students experience social inequalities (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Educators who understand how power and privilege are tied to identity are more likely to empathize with students from nondominant groups; otherwise, educators will continue to see racism as an individual act, rather than a system predicated on favoring certain characteristics and behaviors (Gregory & Fergus 2017, pp. 129-130).

How does this impact students?

“A teacher’s [awareness and] **affirming attitude** toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds **significantly impacts student learning, belief in themselves, and overall academic performance.** By **respecting cultural differences** and **using curricular and instructional practices** related to the cultures of their students, schools and classrooms become **inclusive**” ([Region X Equity Assistance Center](#), p. 6).

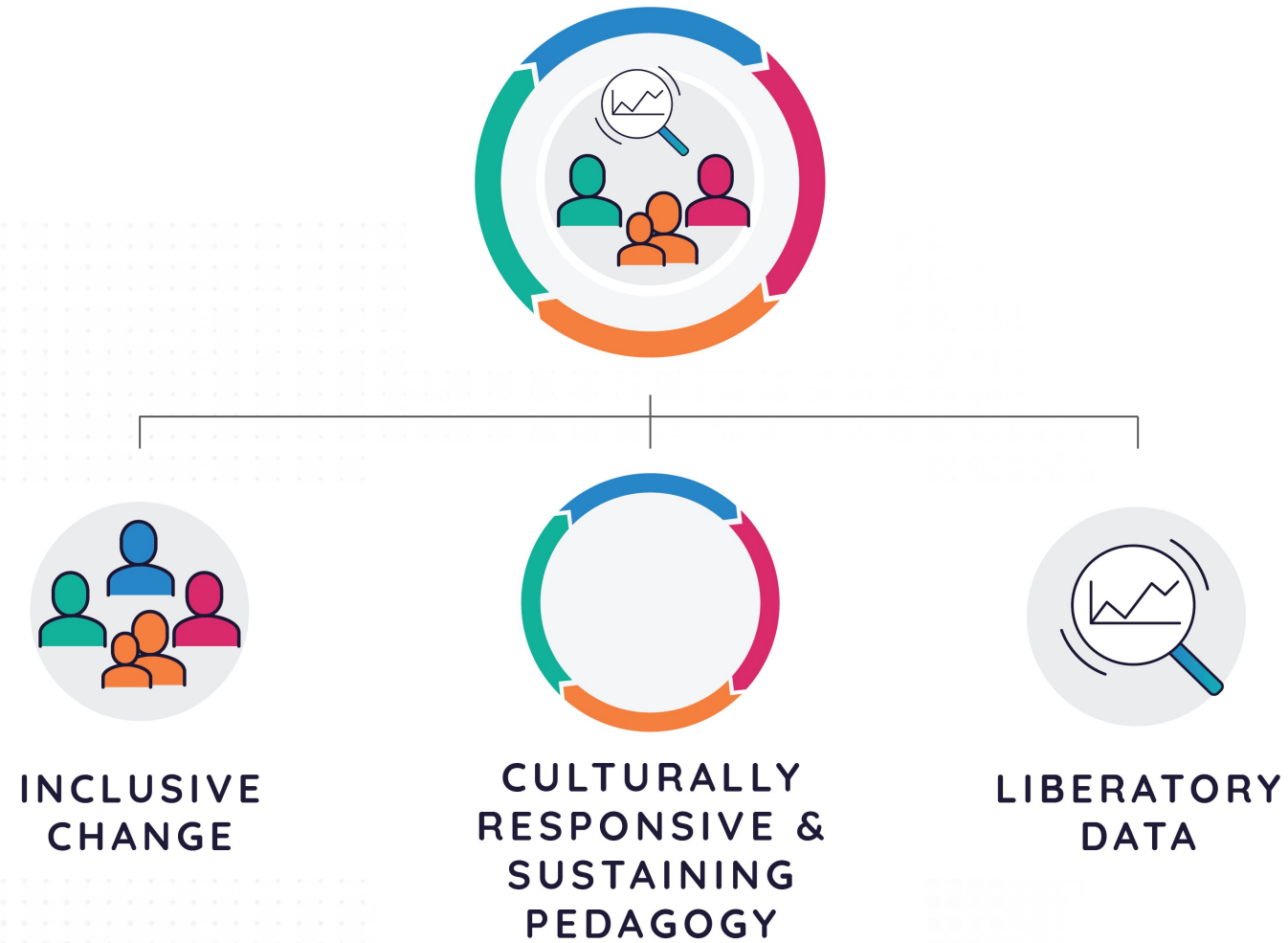
Story from a School Partner

Hear how the **power of awareness** allowed students in a 6th grade Humanities class feel **seen, heard, and valued** in the curriculum and **deepened their joy for learning**.



**Baychester Middle School
Bronx, NY**

Culturally Responsive School Change Model



Problem of Practice

What did you want to work on? Why?

- I was noticing a lack of participation in my class during SY21-22
- It seemed like a combination of students not understanding and/or not wanting to share their thoughts with the whole class
- Students felt embarrassed and afraid of being wrong
- Students were not engaging or connecting with the work from the curriculum

Solution/Strategies

What did you try?

- After engaging in a curriculum audit in a PLC group, the teacher filled in pieces of what the curriculum was lacking to ensure the curriculum was relevant and representation.
 - Mesopotamia, Egypt, & China dominated the Early Civilizations unit, so I wanted to include an important African civilization that would reflect a greater portion of our students' backgrounds.
 - I researched the ancient civilization of Kush and found out how important Queen Amanirenas was to uniting her people and defending their homes from the Romans.
 - This was while we were learning to write short responses, so students used their skills to answer a question about how gender roles were different in Kush, and how these roles led to success for the civilization.

Impact

What did you notice? How did it go?

- Including more about Africa, and in addition finding parts of history where women played a successful role in the advancement of their civilization, led to a much stronger interest in the content by my students.
- This curriculum audit/reflection experience made me want to research more in ancient history to find and elevate the voices that do not have representation in our current curriculum materials.
- I would like to include more history about multiple island nations next year, as many of the students in our school have cultural/familial ties to these countries.

Teacher's Awareness Builds

I used to think that being culturally responsive was only including topics about the population in this school.



Now I think that being culturally responsive is including voices from everyone.

Students Notice & Appreciate the Intentional Effort



“One of my joyful subjects is humanities, there's a lot to learn about in that. It's an interesting subject”

Part of a Schoolwide Culture Shift



Principal: Shawn Mangar

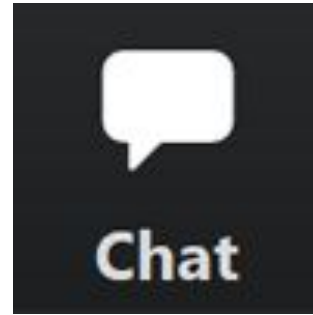
Grades: 6-8

Students: 277

98% BIPOC

86% eligible for FRPL

- Entering Year 3 of a Culturally Responsive School Change partnership with Highlander Institute
- Curriculum audits are 1 of the 4 priority practices scaling across the building
- Used [Student Experience Survey](#) data to drive improvement efforts
- Created process to collect and leverage student feedback to support decision making
- At the end of Year 2, showed the highest growth on ELA MAP scores in the district



Choose 1 to Enter in the Chat Box:

INSPIRATION

What inspires you
about this success
story?

QUESTION

What lingering
questions or concerns
are on your mind?

Beyond Black History Month or Women's History Month, let us **commit to expanding our awareness about our students and their communities** so we can **honor their histories to make learning more meaningful, relevant, and effective.**

Let us leverage these stories to build academic community, to develop student mindsets and learner identities, to nurture critical discourse, and to invite students to articulate a purpose for their learning.

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Please Take a Few Moments to Complete the Feedback Survey

- Share what you enjoyed about the session and suggestions for how we can improve
- **Session Survey Link:**
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Aurora_10-24_Awareness





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Thank you for joining us!

Share Your Thoughts

Participate in our one-minute poll (link in chat box)

