

MASAMASE Spring Conference

Listening and Leading for Equity
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Your Keynote Host



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Jossey-Bass, 2017
#listeningleaders

Story of Self

SAFIR (noun)

Hebrew: Scribe. One who writes for their tribe.
Arabic: Ambassador, Broker and bridge-builder across cultures.



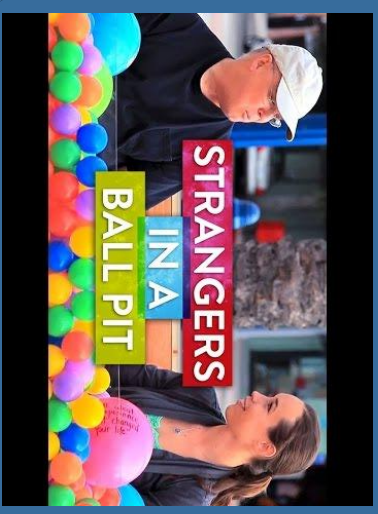
Mom of Mona & Maximo



STRANGERS

IN A

BALL PIT



Our Connections and Differences

1. Find one thing you have in common.
2. Talk about someone who inspires you.
3. Reflect on an experience that made you who you are today.



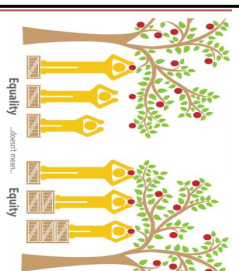
Listening and Leading for Equity

What does educational equity mean to you?



Equity

Every person gets what he or she needs to thrive: socially, emotionally, and intellectually.

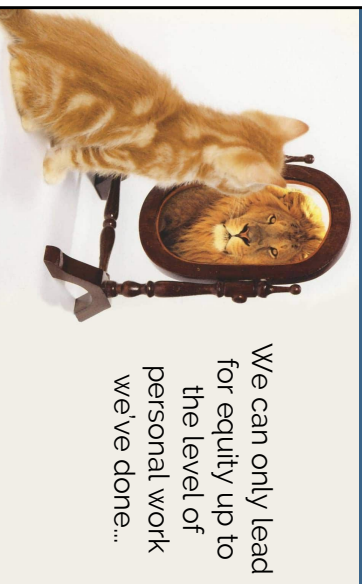


Working toward equity is a journey...



... that begins with you.

We can only lead for equity up to the level of personal work we've done...



Listening and Leading for Equity

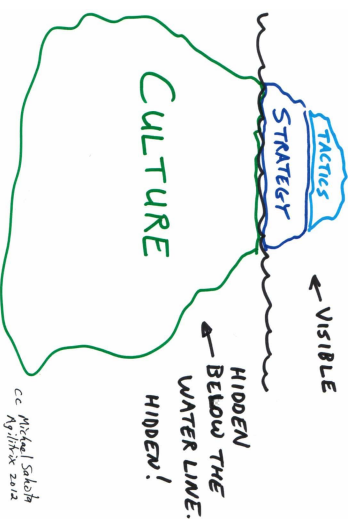
1. Deep Listening
 - Build the culture.
2. Deep Purpose
 - Choose the right data.
3. Deep Discourse
 - Shift the narrative.



Deep Listening: Build the Culture



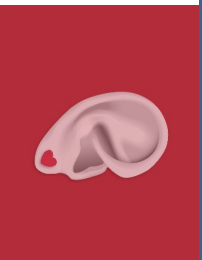
Culture vs. Strategy



We listen all the time...

- 85% of what we know has come through listening.
- We spend 45% of a typical work day listening.
- Less than 2% of professionals receive training in listening.

Constructivist/Deep Listening



- For the benefit of the *speaker*
- I agree to listen to and care for you in exchange for you doing the same for me.



The Guidelines

1. Equal time to talk. *Everyone deserves to be listened to.*
2. No interruptions, advice, or breaking in with a personal story. *People can solve their own problems.*
3. Double confidentiality. *People need to know they can be completely authentic.*
4. No criticizing or complaining about mutual colleagues during your sharing. *A person cannot listen well when feeling attacked or defensive.*



Dyad



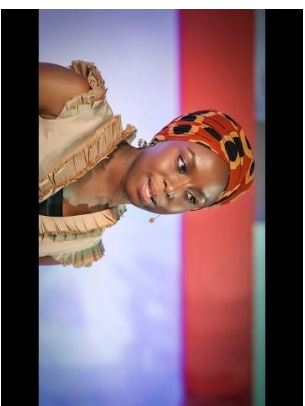
What role does listening play in your work?
When does it get hard for you to listen well?



What % of meaning is conveyed by words?

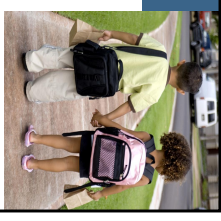


“The Danger of a Single Story”



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

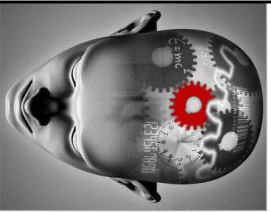
Dyad



What is a single story in your system that you would like to disrupt?*(about teachers, families, students, principals, etc.)*

What pains you about that story?

Where do single stories come from?



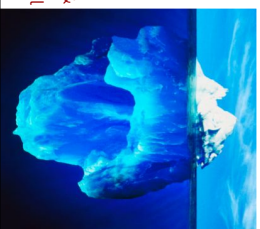
- We are meaning-making machines.
- Our brains constantly seek patterns.
- Single stories are a shortcut the brain takes.
- Over time, they solidify into neural pathways.

Implicit/Unconscious Bias

Attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes that unconsciously affect our perceptions and actions

- We are consciously aware of 2% of our emotional cognition.
- Bias tends to reside in our unconscious networks.

—Dr. Timothy Wilson & Dr. John a. powell



Key Characteristics

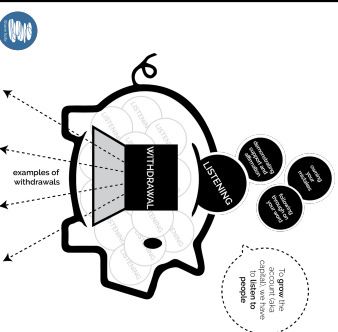
- **Everyone** has unconscious biases.
- Our unconscious biases don't always match our stated beliefs.
- These biases are malleable. We can unlearn the implicit associations we have formed.

Deep listening disrupts single stories.

The shortest distance between two people is a story.



Listening builds relational capital



Move at the speed of trust

Listening builds the culture.



"The micro reflects the macro and vice versa—Fibonacci patterns show up from space to cauliflower. The tiniest most mundane act reflects the biggest creations we can imagine."

- adrienne marie brown

Deep Purpose:
Choose the Right Data



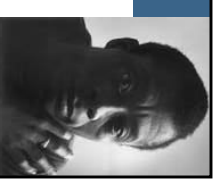
Consider

What is the purpose of education?



James Baldwin (1963)

The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions... To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions, is the way he achieves his own identity. But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish.



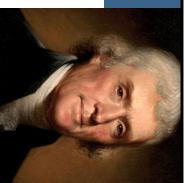
A View from the Balcony



A system, any system, produces what it is designed to produce.

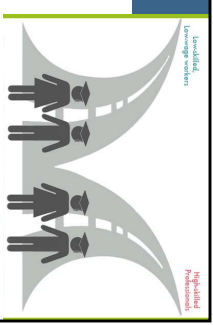
—Thomas Kelly

1776



Thomas Jefferson proposes a two-track educational system, with different tracks in his words for "the laboring and the learned." Scholarship would allow a very few of the laboring class to advance. Jefferson says, by "raking a few geniuses from the rubbish."

1932



A survey of 150 school districts reveals that three quarters of them are using so-called intelligence testing to place students in different academic tracks.

This is the system we inherited.



Satellite Data:
test scores, graduation rates, attendance patterns

Three flaws

- It's lagging
- It lends credibility to sweeping decisions made far from the locus of learning, the classroom
- It reinforces single stories and deficit thinking

Levels of Data



Level 1: SATELLITE DATA

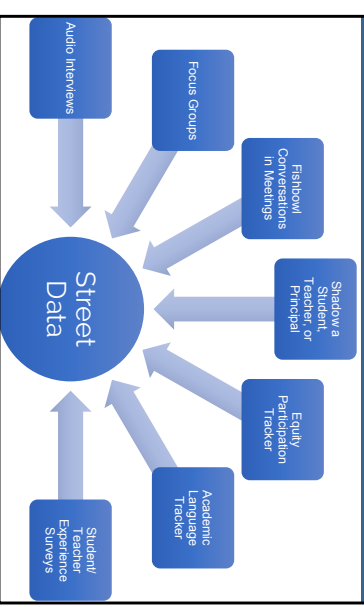


Level 2: MAP DATA
Schoolwide student surveys, common assessments, Fountas and Pinnell



Level 3: STREET DATA
Listening to and observing students, families, and staff experiences and voices

Street data is everywhere... if we listen for it.



Community Walks

A tradition of listening and learning at Oakland International High School



Street Data: Community Walks

- PD designed by parents, students and community leaders
- Educates teachers about students' backgrounds, challenges, and assets
- Staff learns about important landmarks and cultural centers; meet with community leaders, advocates and families



Oakland International

- 100% of students are English language learners, mostly newcomers
- Speak 32+ languages
- Come from 35 countries



Yemeni Community Walk: Start with a teach-in.



1. Student presentations
2. Visit to Halal Market
3. Visit to Mosque
4. Lunch feast with families and imam
5. Closing circle with staff

Family Engagement

Listening to Families
(Street Data)

- 1) PTSA
 - 2) ESL Classes
 - 3) Food Bank
 - 4) Legal Services Clinics
 - 5) International Festival
- 1) Parent Surveys
 - 2) 1:1 Conferences
 - 3) Home visits
 - 4) Focus Groups
 - 5) Community Walks



Yemeni Walk:
Halal Market

Meet the Imam



Guillermo



Feast at the mosque or a home



Young people are the ones leaving now

Unaccompanied children entering U.S. custody
(PRE-2012 to FY-2014)



Unaccompanied Minors Community Walk

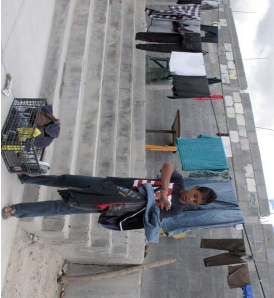


1. Student presentations
2. Student Panel
3. Visit to Centro Legal
4. Visit to Dreamcatcher
5. Lunch at a pupuseria
6. Closing circle with staff

Going to School in El Salvador



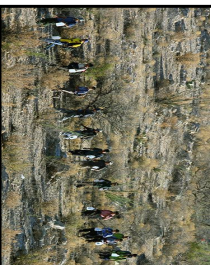
A Treacherous Journey



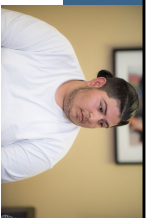
Detention at the Border...



La Frontera



Turn and Talk



What came up for you as you listened to Guillermo's story?

What matters about this street-level data?

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Audio Interviews

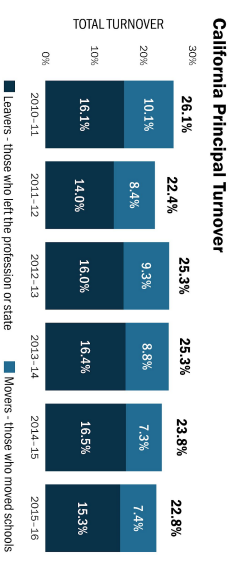
Listening to Principals



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Satellite Data: Principal Turnover in CA





The Impact of Principal Churn

53% of schools in the bottom 20% have novice principals (in first three years)

vs.

26% of schools in the top 20%

A principal in a high-poverty urban school is

50%

more likely to leave than one in a low-poverty suburban school.

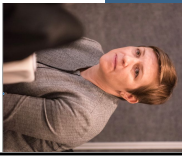
Jot down key words/phrases



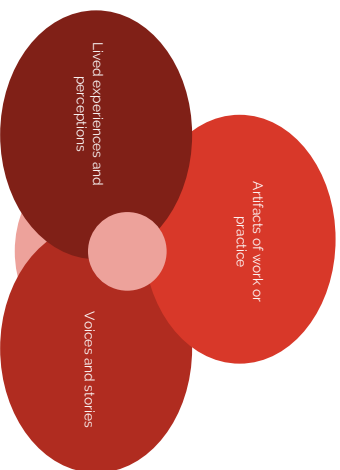
Turn and Talk

Imagine Trish is a principal in your system.

- What data stood out to you?
- What are your important takeaways?



To teach for equity, we must view student and staff voices and experiences as data.



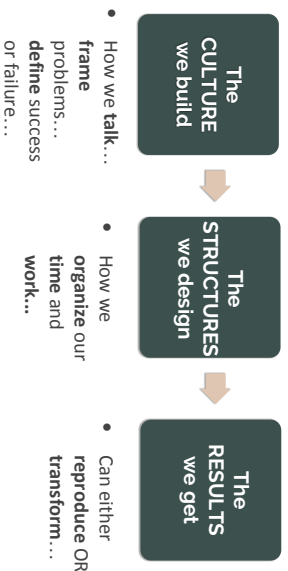
Street Data helps us...

- Align our means and ends around equity
- Humanize the *process* of data-gathering
- Disrupt single stories and implicit biases
- Engage in rapid cycles of improvement

Deep Discourse: Change the Narrative



What is discourse?



Working toward equity requires us to change how we frame the problem.

Discourse 1	Discourse 2
Dominant ways of thinking about and talking about our work that <i>maintain</i> existing practices and serve to reproduce the status quo.	Ways of thinking and talking about our work that <i>challenge</i> the status quo by naming uncomfortable and unequal conditions.

Discourse Excerpt (pages 7-9)



1. Skim the discourse excerpt.
2. Note *one* example or excerpt that stands out to you.
3. Turn and talk to share your excerpt and reflect together.

Discourse I vs. Discourse II

D1 Attributes	D2 Attributes
Single Stories	Multiple Stories
Answers and Quick Fixes	Inquiry and Adaptive Challenges
Improving what exists	Addressing root causes
Externalization/blame ("Look out the window")	Internal Reflection ("Look in the mirror")
Limited Time and Ability	Getting started anyway

Credit: National Equity Project

Dilemma: In Halloween, in Idaho...



Visualize...

What might you do or say about what's happened?



Superintendent's Response

A few assumptions

- This incident is an outlier.
- Our teachers are good people—no malicious intent.
- We are better than this.

Related actions

- Identify the teachers in costume.
- Put them on leave.
- Make sure they don't do this again.

Shifting the Discourse

Reframe

"This incident and others like it illustrate that our current approaches are marginalizing Latino and other families of color in our system. We need to pause, acknowledge the impact, and deeply examine our practices."

An Inquiry Stance

- How is our system built in ways that exclude and dehumanize our families of color?
- How can we slow down and listen to the voices of impacted families in order to get to root causes?
- What might we fundamentally need to change if we do?

Dilemma: Pilgrim Assignment

My name is _____

A Pilgrim is a traveler to a new land. At some time, your family made a pilgrimage to America. Do you know when they came? From where? Why?

My mother's family name is _____

They came from _____ in _____

My father's family name is _____

They came from _____ in _____

Here is a picture of my ancestors arriving in America.

Email from father

Dear Mr. [REDACTED],

Today I was going through [REDACTED] folder and I found a form he was given to fill out. This is a Thanksgiving form, asking about family pilgrimage. The form asks what county his mothers family is from and when they came. It asks the same for my family.

Mr. [REDACTED] is an African-American boy. We don't know where our families came from nor do we know when.

I have an issue with this sheet. It's culturally insensitive AT BEST.

When I read it, my heart sank.

I don't want to make a big deal about this, but I can't help but to pause for a second and be disappointed that I may need to explain to my 7 year old son why it's impossible for me to help him in that way from. I just wanted you to be aware of this.

Why focus on shifting the discourse?

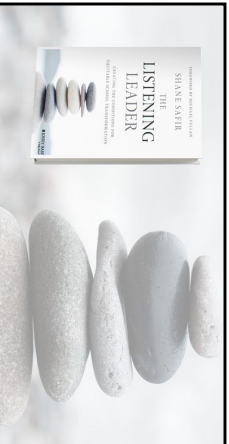
- Language is power.
- It shapes reality in schools.
- Listening leaders have the courage and moral purpose to shift the discourse.

Optimistic Closure



Pasitos

Big journeys begin with
small steps



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Three Layers:

1. Deep listening builds the culture.
2. Street data animates the purpose.
3. Shifting the discourse changes the narrative.



Dr. Asa Hilliard

I have never encountered *any* children in *any* group who are not geniuses. There is no mystery on how to teach them. The first thing you do is treat them like human beings, and the next thing you do is love them.

