

What is your Why?

Narrative: We are troubled on all sides, and yes we are distressed, yet the urgency to address the lack of the leadership in education focused on improved outcomes for students of color or scholars whose families lack financial resources is staggering. The achievement gap and culture of poverty professional development industry has proven to be a lucrative multi-billion dollar business. My grandfather once stated, "Grandson the money is in the treatment of diseases, not the cure." His statement resonated with me as an educator and became relevant as I toured the country and visited schools all over our country dealing with the same issues regardless of geographic area. Dr. Ron Edmonds once stated, "We already know more than we need to know to educate all students the question is why haven't we?"

As a result of a sense of purpose and the calling on my life: I am attaching tools my company and colleagues use to turnaround low performing schools in high poverty, high minority districts successfully. These tools are designed to get at the beliefs, attitudes, and self-identity of your team which is the nucleus of the current levels of performance of your scholars. My tools are free to share with your colleagues. I hope that once you can use the tool, you will desire to dig deeper and become skilled to increase educational outcomes for your scholars. As with any device the more you use it, the more proficient you become with it. My team is here to coach you on the successful development, implementation, and use of the free resources.

At OEPALLC our research has suggested successful school turnaround starts at the individual teacher level. Each day millions of parents send their children to public schools across the country to be educated. Teachers have a tremendous impact on students be it positive or negative. Each day the teacher in front of the student can encourage or discourage a scholar through their actions or lack thereof? As my professor stated, "the people who touch the work know the work." It is important school staffs, administrators and teacher based teams can get at the nucleus or roots of the mental mindsets and schema of the instructors in front of the students.

What is your WHY for teaching in high poverty areas with high concentrations of minority students? Darling Hammond (2005) suggested that 72% of African American students attend public schools where they are the majority of the student population. This is over 60 years after Brown v. Board of Education found separate is unequal, and integration of schools was mandated constitutionally.

These tools will provide you with the ability to get at the schema and mental mindsets of your staff. When you know better, you can do better. Often educators have limited time to reflect on their practices and or why their attitudes or beliefs are grounded in personal experiences.

HOW TO WIN AGAINST THE ODDS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION TOOLS

Tool Number 1:

WHAT IS A GOOD EDUCATION?

Beliefs

Objective: establish a psychologically safe environment that is conducive to discussion with staff. The overall aim is to gain a clear understanding of the feelings of your teacher teams as they define a good education based on their perceptions.

Why: Understanding what a good education means to each teacher is critical when coming to a consensus on how your school will design an educational vision for your students. The experiences and range of definitions to define a good education will help each team develop a roadmap for parents that can be clearly articulated across the institution

Method:

Step 1: Leader question to staff “Please raise your hand if you were told to get a good education or how many of you were told to get a good education?”

Step 2: Leader, “take a piece of paper or use your computer to write your definition of what getting a good education means to you in one paragraph or less”

Step 3: Leader, break teacher teams into groups of 4 or less and ask them to share their definitions of a good education in small groups.

Step 4: Leader, asks teams to share out responses. Dig deeper by asking the teams to explain why they defined a good education as they did and who influenced their meaning of a good education

Step 5: Leader asks the teams to come up with a consensus statement on what a good education means for the scholars at your school, grade level, or across your district.

Concluding the Lesson:

Have each team review the common threads based on the question; what is a good education? Once teams come to a consensus based on responses from the groups the school leaders use the results to start the visioning activities for your school.