

# Removing Bias and Taking Action:

*A PBIS Approach to  
Equity*



# Objectives:

- Attendees will learn about deficit thinking and how this connects with implicit bias.
- Attendees will review strategies to combat deficit thinking within an MTSS model utilizing positive behavior approaches and practices.
- Attendees will problem-solve how to reframe deficit thinking into a proactive action step



# Warm-Up Activity

**The Emotional Guidance Scale**

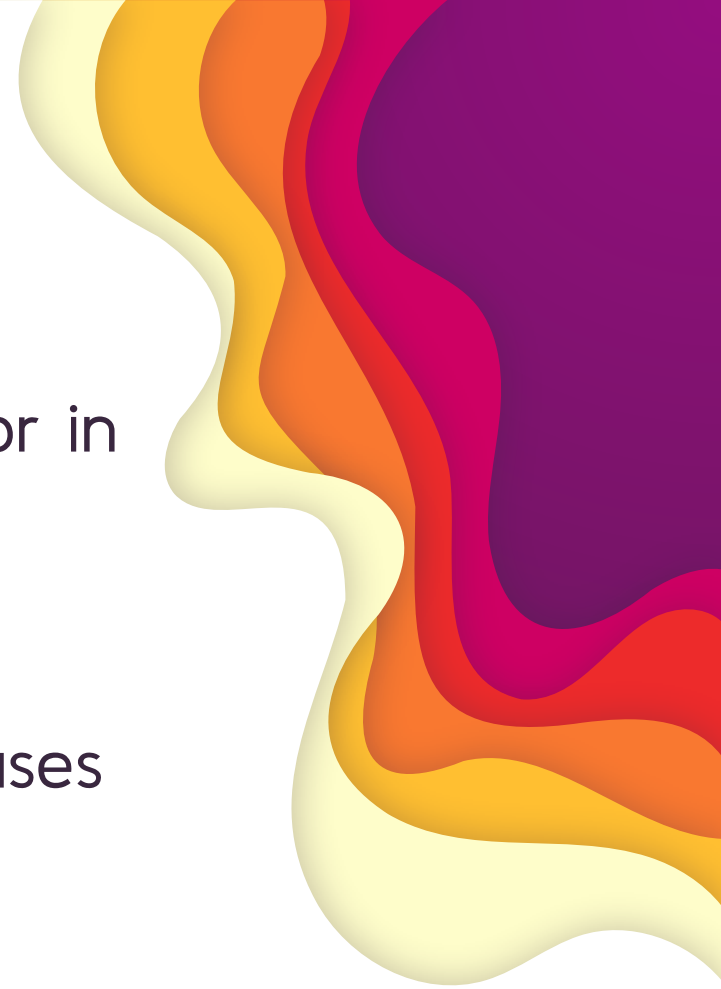


1. Joy / Appreciation / Empowered / Freedom / Love
2. Passion
3. Enthusiasm/Eagerness/Happiness
4. Positive Expectation/Belief
5. Optimism
6. Hopefulness
7. Satisfaction – Contentment
8. Boredom
9. Pessimism
10. Frustration/Irritation/Impatience
11. Overwhelm
12. Disappointment
13. Doubt
14. Worry
15. Blame
16. Discouragement
17. Anger
18. Revenge
19. Hatred/Rage
20. Jealousy
21. Insecurity/Guilt/Unworthiness
22. Fear/Grief/Depression/Despair/Powerlessness

## Discussion Question:

Think about a case in which a student displays disruptive behavior in class

In discussion with teachers/staff, what often comes up as root causes of the student's behavior?



# Today we will review a collection of research

- There may be pieces of this presentation/ discussion that feel uncomfortable
- This information is not meant to suggest anyone is causing harm (intentionally or otherwise)
- This presentation is designed to recognize how reframing our thoughts can help improve our approach with all students

# Research by Dr. Kelsie Reed asked teachers what they saw as root causes of behavior - common responses:

- Family background
- Lack of structure
- Domestic issues
- Attention seeking
- No parental support
- Learning disability
- No father present
- Lack of educational skills
- Chaotic household

Approximately 86% of the 300 teachers in the study gave responses that fell in this category

## This is considered “deficit thinking”

- Deficit thinking involves the act of blaming a student, a student’s family, or a student’s culture for academic or behavioral difficulties that occur at school - this can lead educators to believing shortcomings cannot be remedied at school

# Deficit Thinking Can...

- Lead educators to assume nothing can be done to support the student
- Lead educators to lower expectations for the student





# Deficit Thinking can be a result of Implicit Bias

Implicit Bias: an unconscious preference for or a prejudice against a group of people which can affect how we treat others.



# Implicit Bias

1. Operates at the subconscious level.
2. Runs contrary to our conscious beliefs.
3. The mental associations we make about people, ideas, and objects shape our behavior and often do harm to others.

[Source: TED Talk- Dushaw Hockett](#)



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**JUST LIKE MOST SOCIAL  
JUSTICE ISSUES, OUR  
HISTORICALLY  
MARGINALIZED STUDENTS  
CONTINUE TO BEAR THE  
BRUNT OF THE IMPACTS OF  
DEFICIT THINKING**

@sassy4socialjustice


# As you can see, many of us start with deficit thinking and bias

Dr. Reed posits the concern arises not from what  
root cause we attribute the behaviors to

The problem lies in how we  
think and talk about students

# The other “14” percent - Alternatives to Deficit Thinking

- We need more SEL training for teachers and admin
- Student is bored
- Inconsistent expectations from teacher
- Needs assistance completing work
- The student might not be engaged in current activity
- Communication amongst building teams is lacking



**Discussion Question:**  
How are these perceived  
causes different?

When a problem is perceived as outside your control - common strategies are:



Think of this in terms of your “Circle of Control”

## **We must shift our thinking**

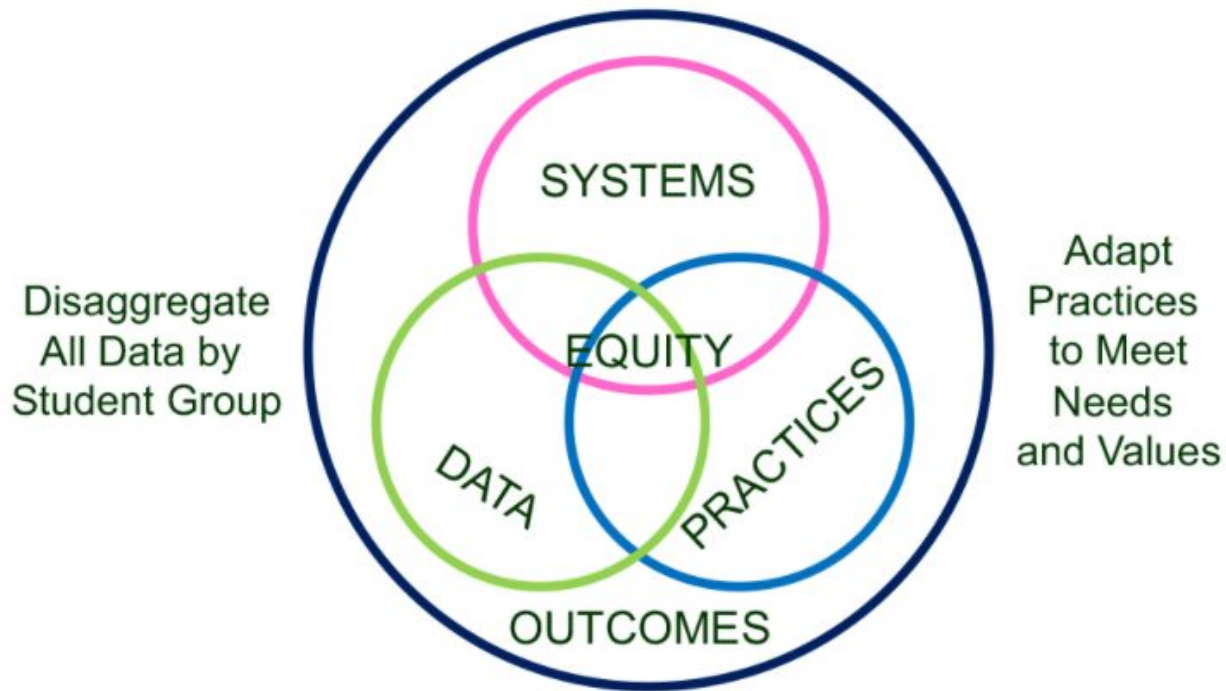
Instead of considering the deficits of the student or their home life...

We need to shift our thinking to consider what supports we are failing to provide.





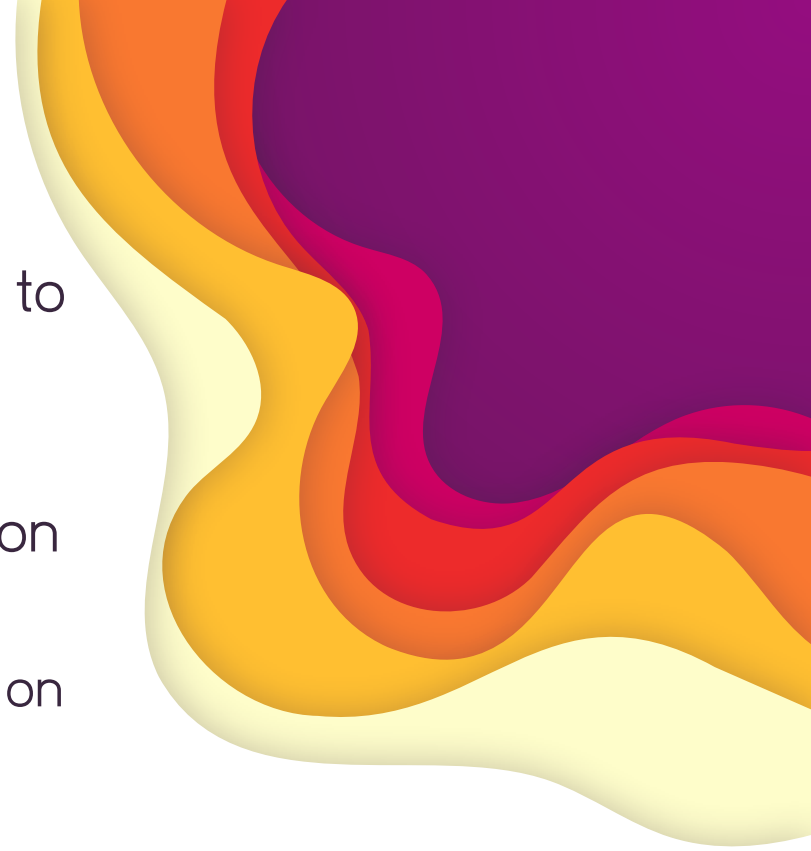
Support Educators  
through Equity-focused PD



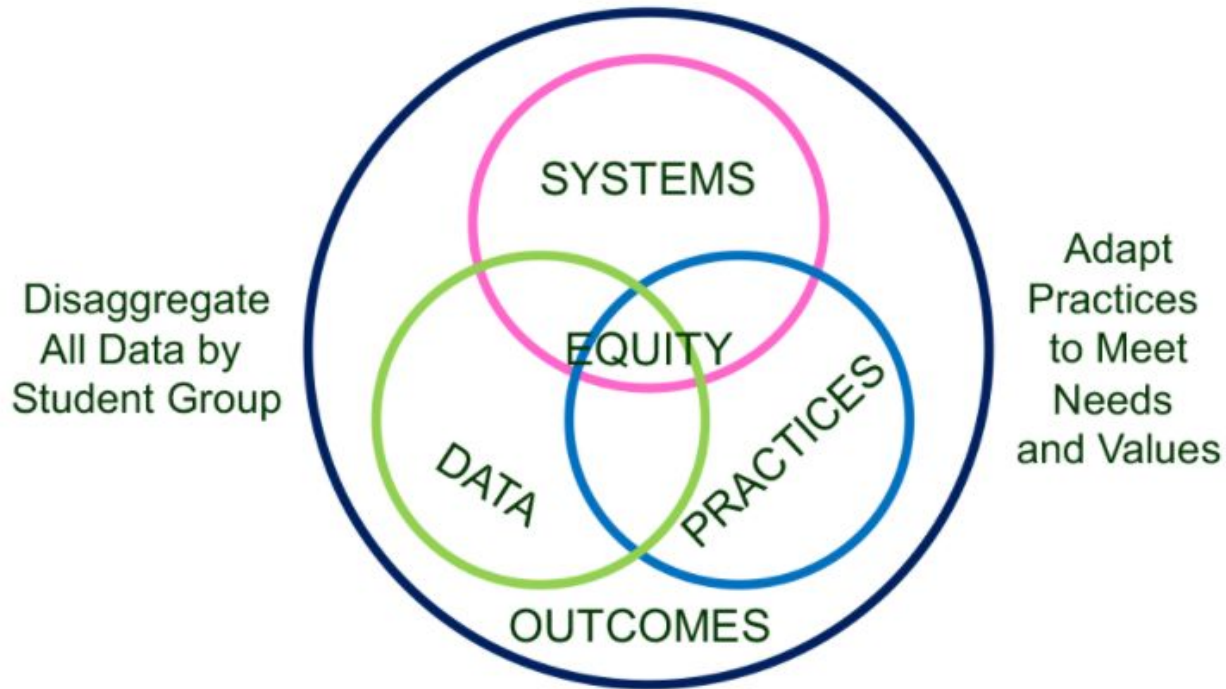
High Expectations  
for Each Student

# Disaggregate Data

- Use and create tools in your district to evaluate number of majors and suspensions across demographics
- Determine levels of overrepresentation for groups
  - Example: 10% of your students are on an IEP, but 25% of your discipline majors are by students with IEPs = 15% over-representation



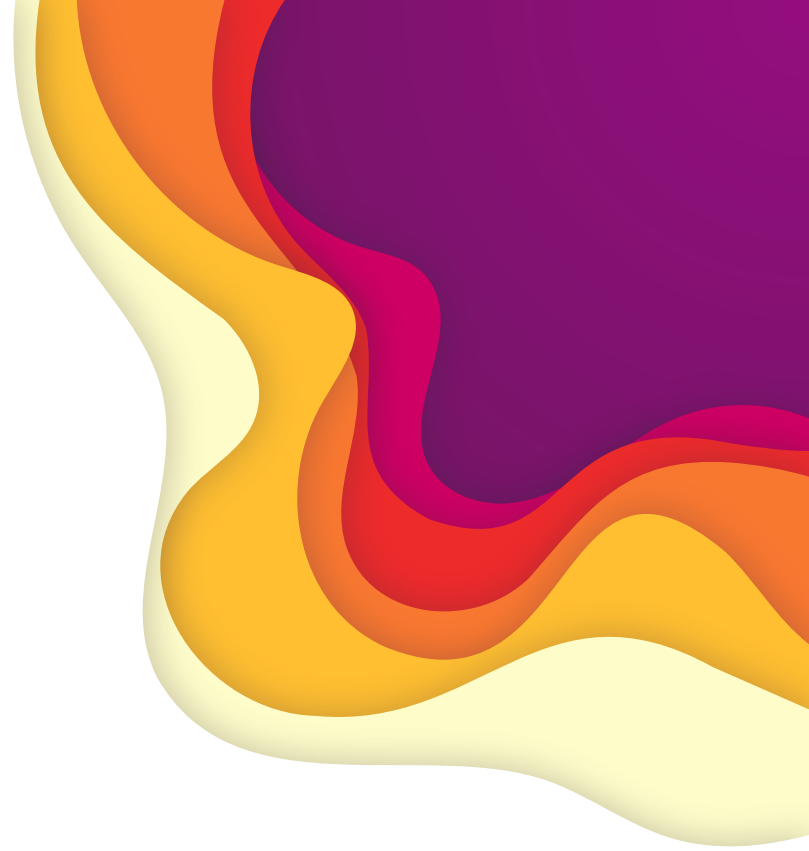
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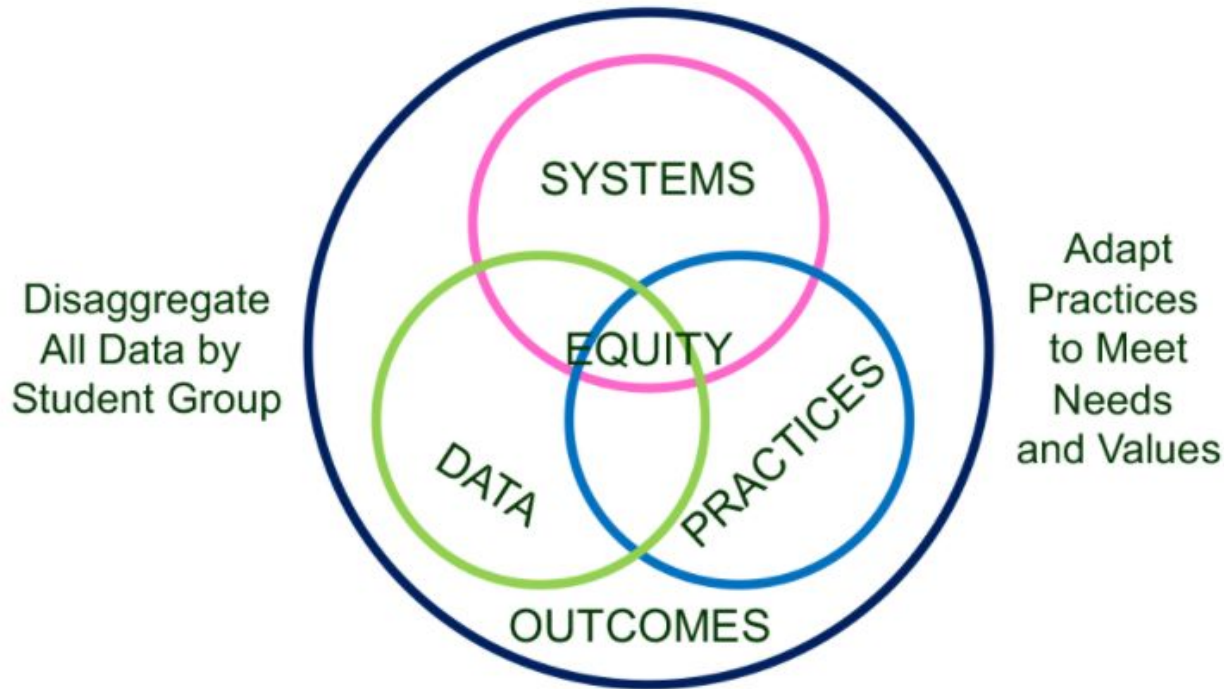
High Expectations  
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# Support Educators through Equity Focused PD

- Should get a pulse for where your staff is starting
  - Could create questionnaire on perceived equity PD needs
  - Identify actual needs based on data
- Address appropriate needs with an awareness of staff readiness



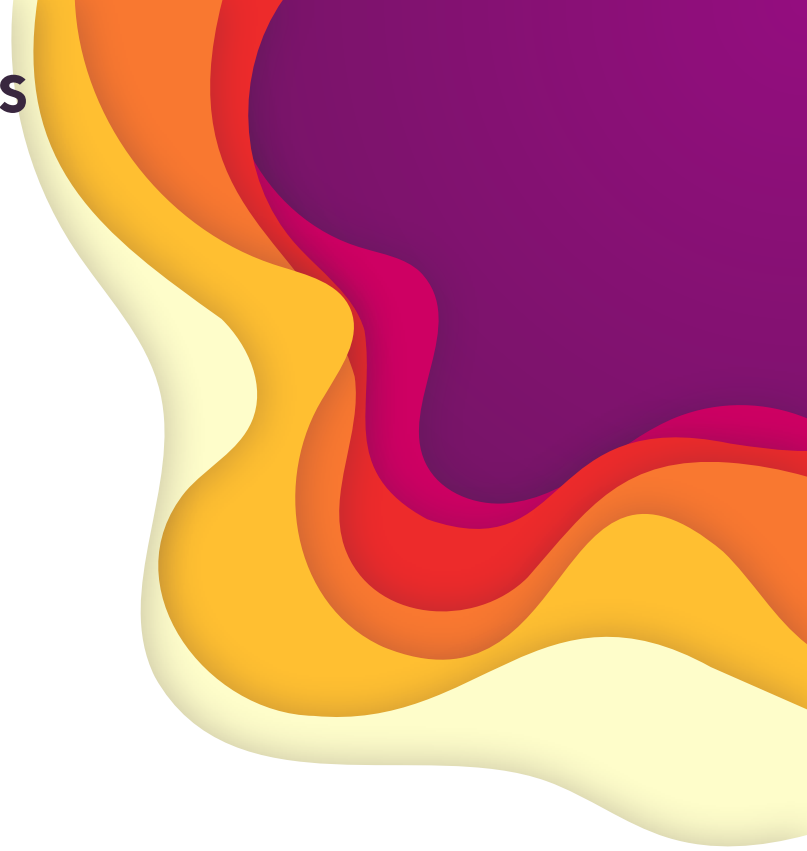
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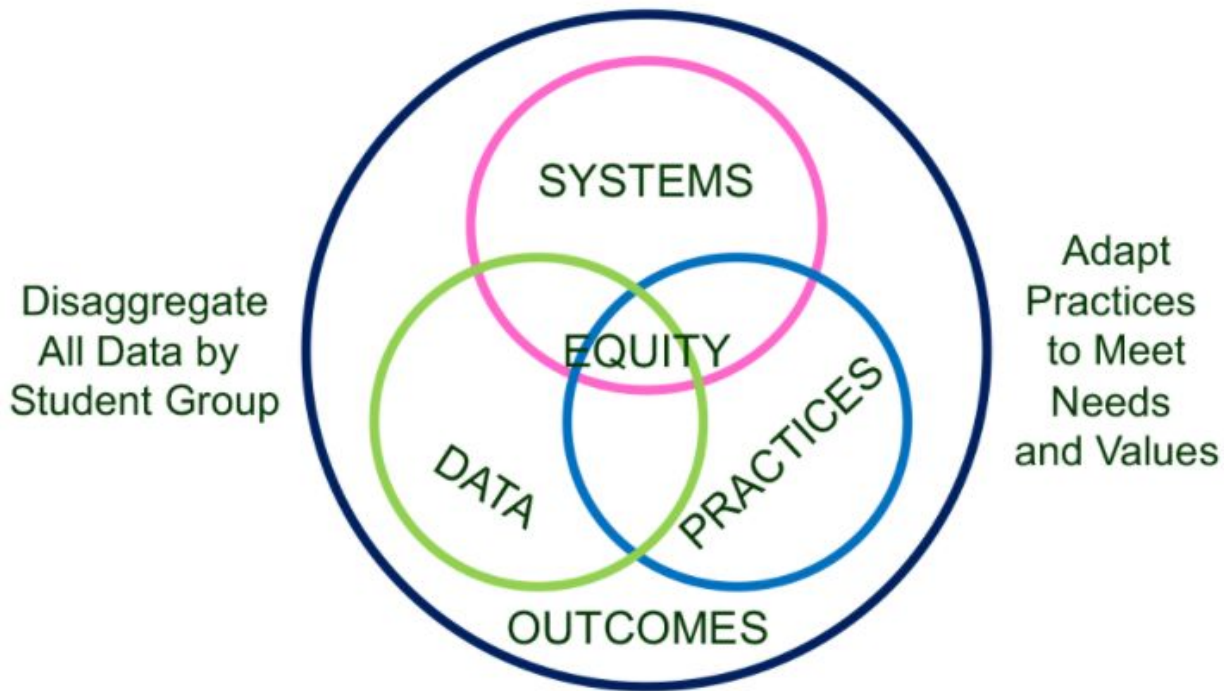
High Expectations  
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# Adapt Practices to Meet Needs and Values

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Support Educators  
through Equity-focused PD

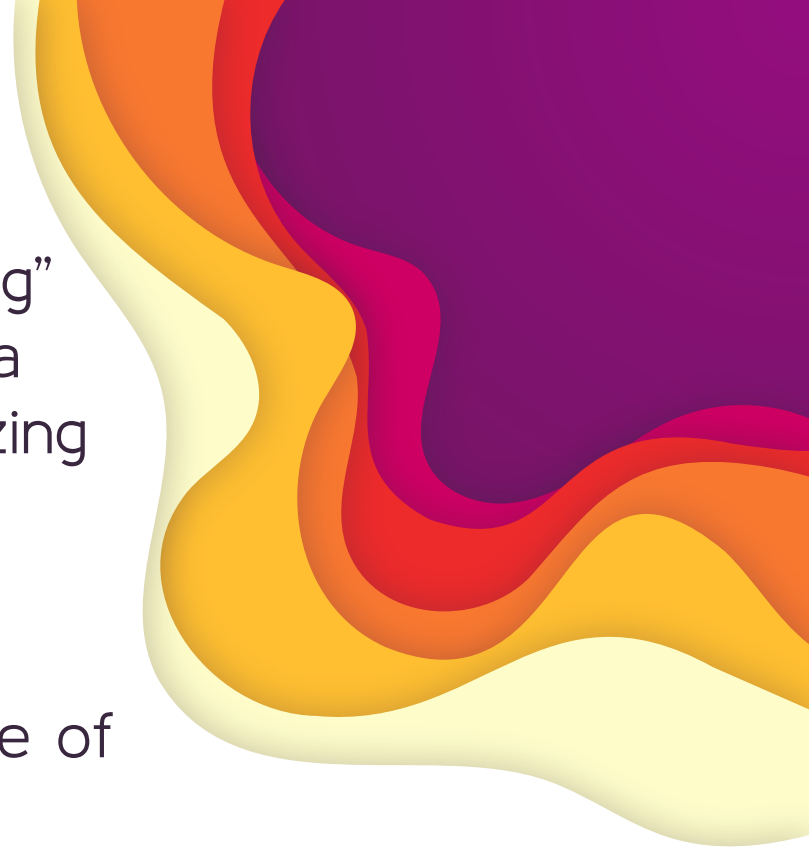


High Expectations  
for Each Student



# High Expectations for Each Student

- When following a “problem-solving” model, it can be easy to fall into a trap of admiring the problem utilizing deficit thinking
- Important to utilize data and objective information to determine if patterns exist
- Important to Reframe for Tier 3







# How can we **REFRAME?**

Reframing can help us identify and confront our own biases and improve our sense of efficacy

## MOVING AWAY FROM DEFICIT THINKING IN SCHOOLS

### INSTEAD OF THIS

"HER PARENTS NEVER  
TAUGHT HER HOW TO  
BEHAVE"



"SHE MAY BENEFIT FROM  
MORE INTENSIVE  
SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL,  
BEHAVIORAL SKILL  
INSTRUCTION AT SCHOOL"

"HE DOESN'T RECEIVE  
ENOUGH ATTENTION AT  
HOME, SO HE SEEKS  
NEGATIVE ATTENTION AT  
SCHOOL"



"HE NEEDS MORE POSITIVE  
RELATIONSHIPS AND  
POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT  
AT SCHOOL"

"THE CONTENT IS WAY OVER  
THEIR HEAD SO THEY ACT  
OUT BECAUSE THEY DON'T  
UNDERSTAND"

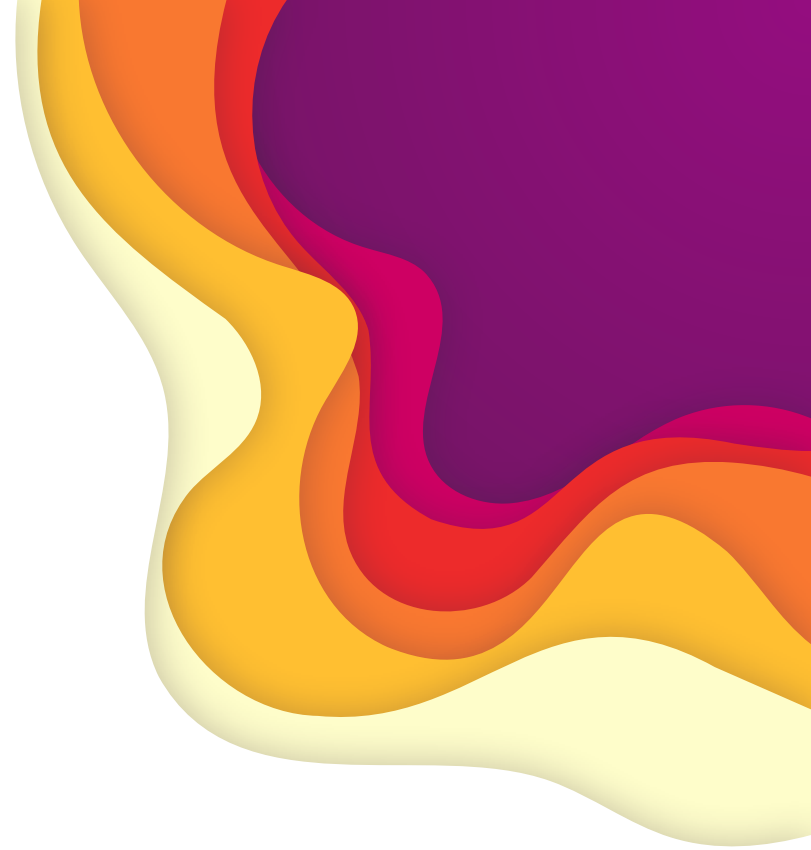


"I NEED TO MODIFY MY  
INSTRUCTIONAL  
TECHNIQUES AND/OR THE  
CURRICULUM TO BETTER  
FIT THEIR NEEDS"

"HE HAS A CHAOTIC  
HOME LIFE"



"HIS CURRENT SCHOOL  
ENVIRONMENT IS TOO  
UNSTRUCTURED AND HE MAY  
BENEFIT FROM A MORE  
STRUCTURED ROUTINE"



# Reframing Activity

- You hear a child's teacher say "They come from mess."
- "We can make progress if the parents just get them here."
- "So they have time to be on facebook during our conference but won't prioritize coming to the school to see how their kid is doing?"
- "This kid is performing to their ability, we can't expect them to do any better."
- "My class is too far behind for grade level work."
- "They don't care. They don't want to learn."

When we see a child appear...

Lazy

Stubborn

Messy

Disruptive

Oppositional

Unmotivated

Forgetful

These are the Executive Function skills we need to support them with...

Sustained attention

Goal-directed persistence

Flexibility

Organisation

Emotional control

Response inhibition

Time management

Task initiation

Planning/prioritisation

Metacognition

Working memory

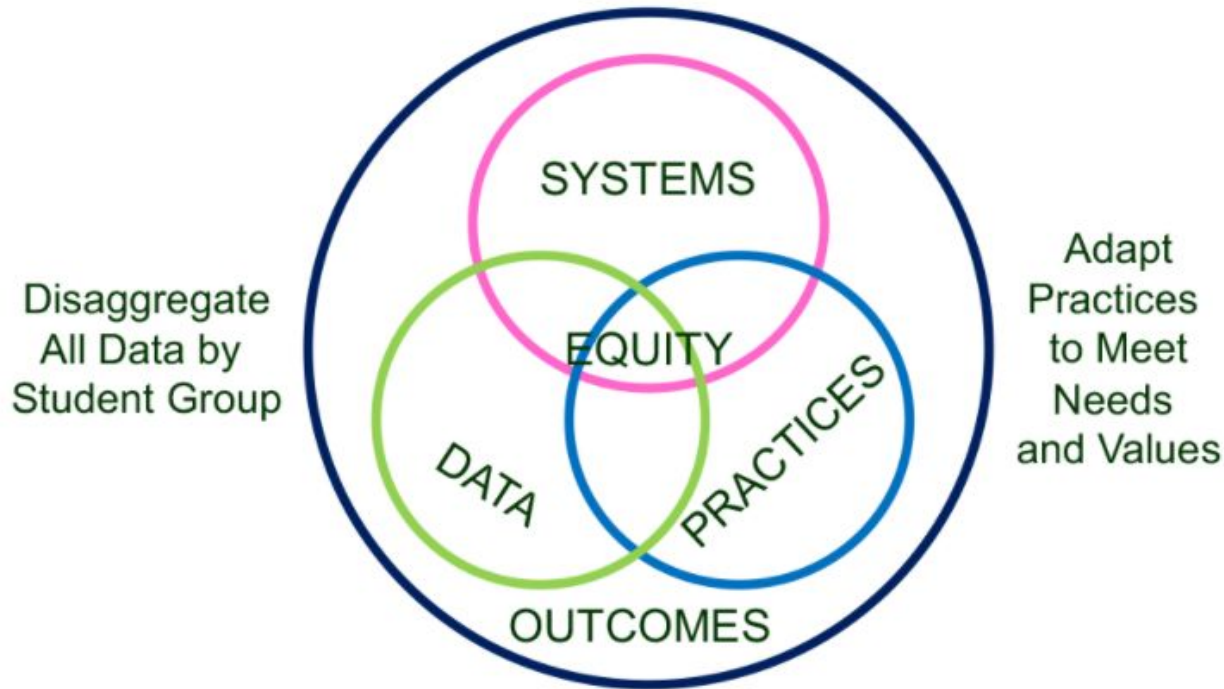


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Imagine if we did our best to reframe all root causes that blame families or blame students into root causes that are within our control? Not only does this encourage a more positive outlook toward the student, it prevents us from giving up on the student.

- Dr. Kelsie Reed, NCSP

Support Educators  
through Equity-focused PD



High Expectations  
for Each Student



# Let's talk about Expectations

- What has research on “expectations” taught us?
  - It is possible and imperative to maintain compassion and accountability (a “warm demander”)
- When we have lower expectations (deficit thinking), we end up with students with lower performance
- When we have high expectations, students perform better! High expectations correlate with high achievement and are critical for cultural competence

# The No Nonsense Nurturer / Warm Demander

*Students sharing why they are successful in their classroom...*

## No Nonsense

- “She doesn’t play”
- “He wants me to stay after school until my homework is done.”

## Demander



## Nurturer

- “She would never let me fail.”
- “He comes to my game to cheer me on.”

## Warm

*These students are sharing no nonsense qualities (refusing to let them fail) while noting their nurturing sides (life-altering relationships).*



# What does this mean for PBIS?

- Having the same building expectations / using your matrix are the building blocks for high behavior expectations
- Reframing expectations to be presented positively and clearly are ways to be a warm demander
- Working as a class and school to have student input when creating matrices/expectations to help **honor cultural strengths**

# Cultural Competence in PBIS Includes

- Holding high expectations for all students
- Using students' cultures and experiences to enhance their learning
- Providing all students with access to effective instruction and adequate resources for learning



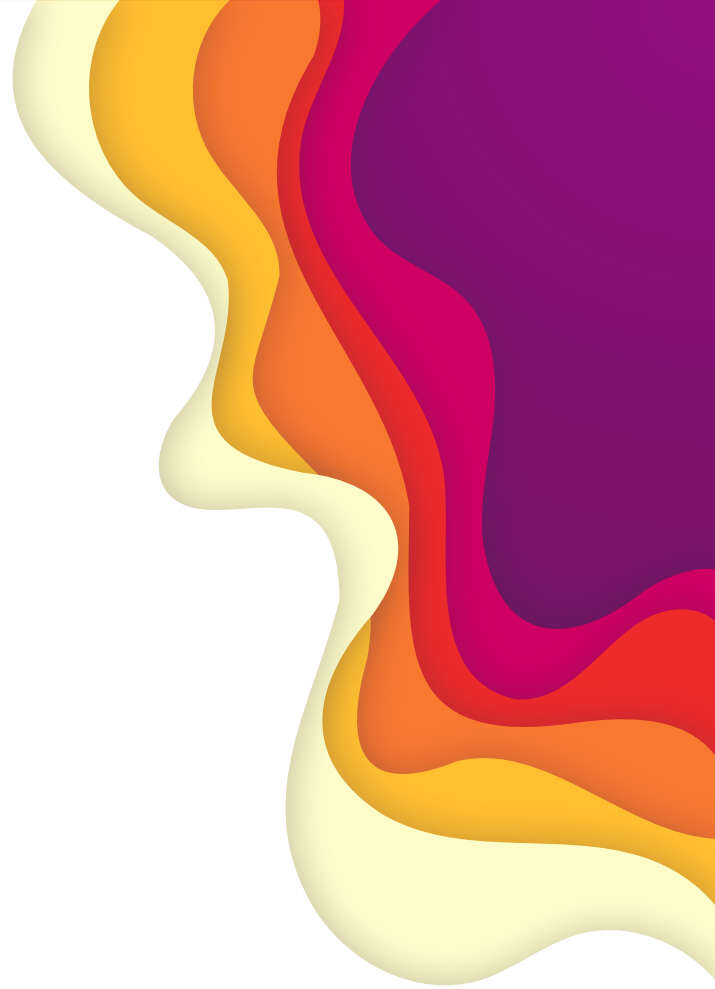
# Bringing it Back to...

## No-Nonsense Nurturer/Warm Demander

- Balance expectations and structure with compassion and love
  - It's BECAUSE I care about you that I continue to expect this
  - I'm letting you down if I don't teach you everything I can
  - I know you can do this
  - You are just as capable as anyone else

# Body Language and Tone

- Remember to think about your body language and your tone - communicate kindness and caring with your body when you encourage them to rise to your expectations



# The Warm Demander & No Nonsense Nurturer Revisited

Let's make sure you know what it is not!

Yelling at kids thinking this makes you demanding or portraying “No Nonsense”

Lowering expectations because you believe this makes kids think you care about them and their circumstances.

Making it a point to develop friendships that blur the lines of the teacher-student relationship



# Continuum Revisited



Has your original self-rating from the beginning of the session changed?



“

You have to ignore it when a child says, ‘I don’t want to,’ because what they’re really saying is, ‘I don’t think I can and I **need you to believe in me** until I can believe in myself.’

-Shanna Peeples, 2015 CCSSO  
National Teacher of the Year



# Thanks!




Any questions?



# References and Resources

- Deficit Thinking work of Dr. Kelsie Reed (soon releasing book with Dr. Byron McClure)
- Center on PBIS - Equity ([pbis.org/topics/equity](https://pbis.org/topics/equity))
  - Using Discipline Data within SWPBIS to Identify and Address Disproportionality: A Guide for School Teams
- A collection of research and next steps is linked here, in the: Ready to Learn, Empowered to Teach: Guiding Principles for Effective Schools and Successful Students issued by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
- Multiplication is for white people: Raising expectations for other people's children by Lisa Delpit
- Every Student, Every Day: A No-Nonsense Nurturer Approach to Reaching All Learners by Kristyn Klei Borrero

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