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2014

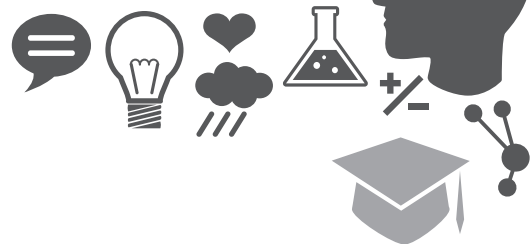
23–26 May

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## Anthony Muhammad

Monday 26 May

### Elephants in the Room: Confronting Barriers to Collaboration

*Session 3*





## ANTHONY MUHAMMAD



Dr Anthony Muhammad is a much sought-after educational consultant. A practitioner for nearly 20 years, he has served as a principal for a middle and high school, a middle school teacher and assistant principal. His tenure as a practitioner has earned him several awards as both a teacher and a principal. Dr. Muhammad's most notable accomplishment came as principal of Levey Middle School in Southfield, Michigan, a National School of Excellence, where student proficiency on state assessments more than doubled in five years. Dr. Muhammad and the staff at Levey used the Professional Learning Communities at Work™ model of school improvement, and they have been recognised in several videos and articles as a model high-performing PLC. As a researcher, Dr. Muhammad has published articles in several publications in both the United States and Canada.

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## Elephants in the Room: Confronting Barriers to True Education

Anthony Muhammad, PhD



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## What Has History Taught Us?

All students have not benefited  
equally from access to educational  
institutions?

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## The Achievement Gap

**Achievement gap** refers to the observed and persistent disparity on a number of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by **gender, race/ethnicity, language, disability, and socioeconomic status**. The achievement gap can be observed on a variety of measures, including standardized test scores, grade point average, dropout rates, and college enrollment and completion rates.

(The Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University,  
<http://www.agi.harvard.edu/projects/thegap.php>)

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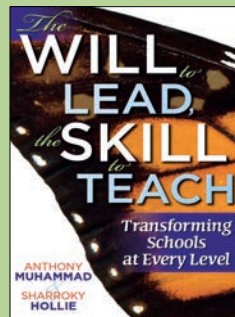
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## Pathway to Excellence for ALL

"We assert that despite these statistics, student ethnicity and social class are not barriers to learning; rather, schools that do not properly respond to the needs of these students are the barriers."



—Muhammad & Hollie, *The Will to Lead, The Skill to Teach: Transforming Schools at Every Level* (2011), p. 2

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## Two Forms of Change

- Technical–structural (skill)
- Cultural (will)

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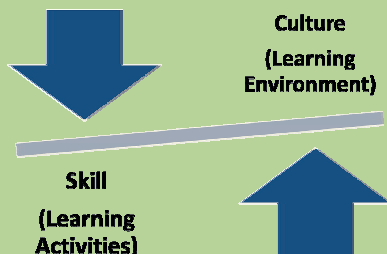
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## Will and Skill




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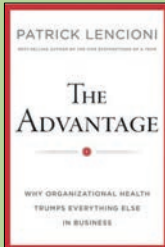
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### Don't Underestimate Culture



"The health of an organization provides the context for strategy, finance, marketing, and everything else that happens within it, which is why it is the single greatest factor determining an organization's success. More than talent. More than knowledge. More than innovation."

—Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business* (2012), p. 2

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### Choosing Being "Smart" Over Being "Healthy"

#### Smart

- The "sophistication bias"
- The "adrenaline bias"
- The "quantification bias"

#### Healthy

- Build a cohesive team.
- Create clarity.
- Over-communicate clarity.
- Reinforce clarity.

—Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business* (2012)

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### Avoiding Culture

"Most leaders prefer to look for answers where the light is better, where they are more comfortable. And the light is certainly better in the measurable, objective, and data-driven world of organizational intelligence (the smart side of the equation) than in the messier, more unpredictable world of organizational health."

—Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business* (2012), p. 7

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## Apprenticeship of Observation

- Educators have been socialized in their field since childhood and adopt the norms
- The average educator was a good student
- Educators subconsciously protect a system that was of personal benefit
- Educators implement practices that protect the system (academic obstacle course)

(Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*, 1975)

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## Healthy School Culture Connection of Two Great Concepts




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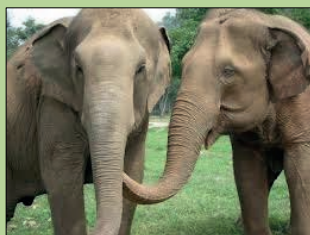
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## Are You Willing to Confront the Elephants in the Room?




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### Predeterminations

- Perceptual
- Intrinsic
- Institutional

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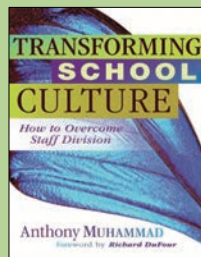
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### Perceptual Predetermination

“Perceptual predetermination involves an educator’s own socialization and the impact of that socialization on his or her practice in the classroom, including expectations for student performance.”

—Muhammad, *Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division* (2009), p. 21



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### Stereotypes

“To help simplify a complex world, people develop mental models called schemas. Problems arise when people start to oversimplify schemas. Oversimplified schemas are known as **stereotypes**. **Stereotypes** are fixed impressions and exaggerated and preconceived ideas and descriptions about a certain type of person, group, or society.”

—Langlois, Kalakanis, Rubenstein, Larson, Hallam, & Smoot, “Maxims or Myths of Beauty? A Meta-Analytic and Theoretical Review,” *Psychological Bulletin* (2000), p. 390

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## Challenging Beliefs

“Teacher expectations of student performance is a thorny issue in American education because of the inevitable overlay of accusations that low expectations for some groups of students reflects racial, ethnic, or class-biased prejudice.”

—Jackson & Davis, *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century* (2000), p. 13

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## Corrective Lenses “The Optometrist”

Combat false/incomplete information with better information.

Try:

- Enlightenment
- Encouragement
- Experimentation




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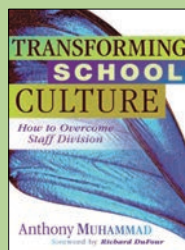
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## Intrinsic Predetermination

“Intrinsic predetermination is the student’s perception of his or her probability of success in school. The messages that students receive from their environment—the home, community, and school—can either build their confidence or work to destroy it.”



—Muhammad, *Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division* (2009), p. 23

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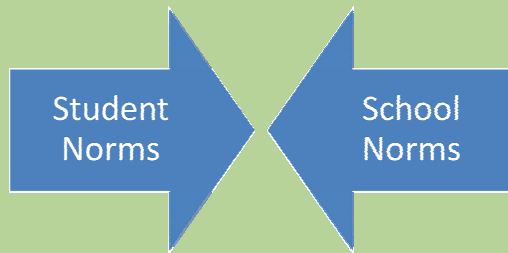
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### When Cultures Collide



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### Assimilation or Education

**Assimilation**

- Control
- Manipulation
- Standardization
- Docile

**Education**

- Liberation
- Development
- Creativity
- Empowerment

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### Gifted and Talented Education

"Gifted and talented education works for two reasons: the student believes that he is gifted and the teacher believes that he is gifted. Based on this agreement, the teacher and student create the right learning environment and they utilize rigorous learning activities. All human beings possess a gift; the key is to identify and capitalize on it."

—Renzulli, "What Makes Giftedness? Reexamining a Definition,"  
*Phi Beta Kappan* (1978)

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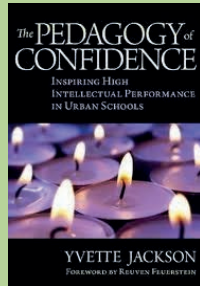
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## Pedagogy of Confidence

- Identify and activate student strengths.
- Elicit high intellectual performance.
- Provide enrichment.
- Integrate prerequisites.




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## The Maestro

Blending the best in students with the best in the institution to create beautiful music




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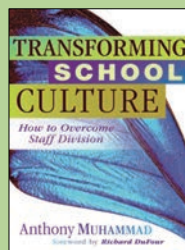
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## Institutional Predetermination

"I contend that we have institutional barriers in place that make the job of educating every student very difficult."



—Muhammad, *Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division* (2009), p. 25

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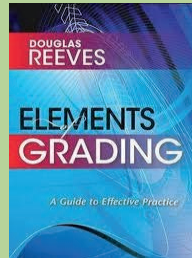
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### Grading Policies

- Feedback
- Accuracy
- Fairness
- Timeliness
- Specificity



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### Other Policy Elephants

- Student placement in advanced coursework
- Zoning policies around ethnicity and economic class
- Discipline/expulsion policies
- Graduation standards/policies

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### Rosa Parks Moment



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### Purpose

“The best case for public education has always been that it is a common good. Everyone ultimately has a stake in the caliber of schools, and education is everyone’s business.”

—Fullan, *The Moral Imperative of School Leadership* (2003)

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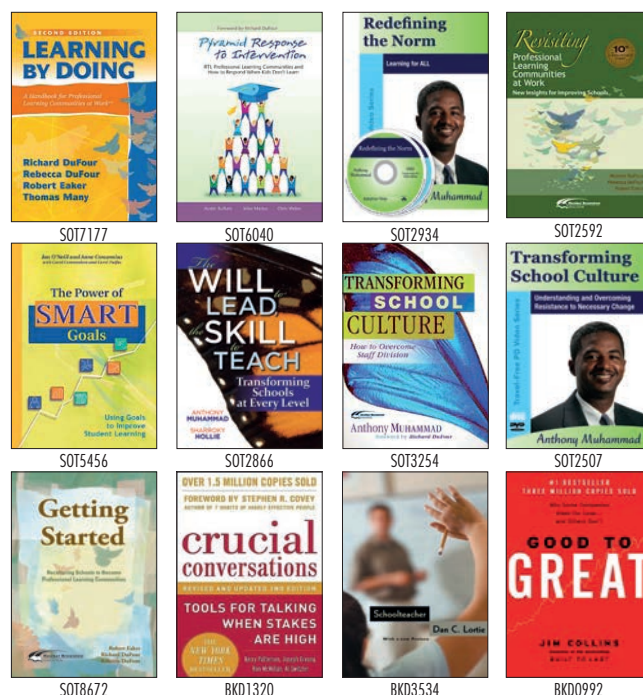
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