

That Was Not My Plan:  
*Leveraging Unexpected Leadership Paths  
for People of Color in Independent Schools*

2019 NAIS PEOPLE OF COLOR CONFERENCE

SEATTLE, WA

# Agenda

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Welcome and  
Grounding

Icebreaker Activity

Survey Findings:  
Transformative  
Professional  
Experiences for  
Educators of Color

Power of Storytelling

Essential Takeaways  
and Closing

Q&A

# Goals for today:

- Recognizing and honoring your unexpected paths
- Utilizing windows of opportunity for others

# Icebreaker

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2-MINUTE  
ACTIVITY



CHOOSE A  
PARTNER IN A  
NEARBY SEAT



TAKE 30  
SECONDS TO  
CONSIDER HOW  
TO DESCRIBE  
YOUR ROLE IN  
YOUR SCHOOL



INTRODUCE  
YOURSELF AND  
WHAT YOU DO  
**\*WITHOUT  
USING YOUR  
JOB TITLE\***

# 2015 Survey Findings

# Methodology

2015 Survey

Transformative

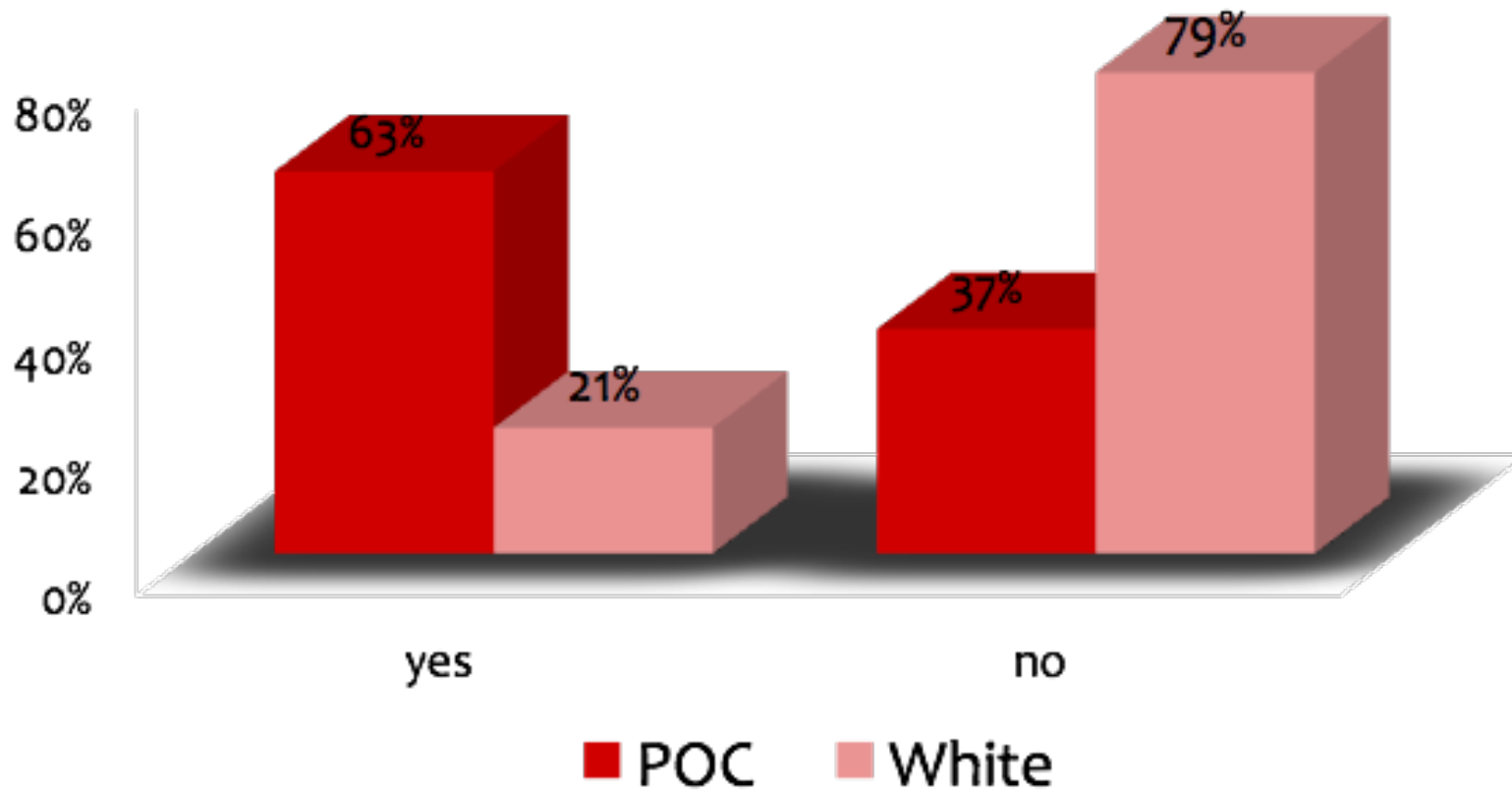
Professional Development

- Survey sent electronically to professional networks in New York, Connecticut, Atlanta, Philadelphia, and Tampa. Also shared via social media.
- The higher response rate of people of color is most likely reflective of our relationships with people of color in independent schools.
- 134 Respondents
  - 95 POC; 39 White
  - 52% African American/ Black
  - 67% women; 32% men; 1% gender non-conforming

# Primary Questions

2015 Survey:  
Transformative  
Professional Development

- Do you aspire to a formal leadership role?
- Name the 1-2 professional development experiences that have been most effective in developing you as a leader. What made them so?
- The impact of affinity spaces on professional development.



DO YOU ASPIRE TO A FORMAL  
LEADERSHIP POSITION?





# WHITE PEOPLE: COMMENTS ON TRANSFORMATIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“A full year to learn about the spectrum of all schools, time to study topics of interest to me... and a weekly seminar over a year to talk about issues and readings with other school leaders.”

“I teach with gifted people. I want to hear what they have to say. Not in a speech or canned presentation. I want to see what they're doing and let myself enter their world/become inspired. I ALWAYS come away with new ideas--some directly from their presentations, some adaptations.”

“They were directly related to my teaching and provided practical ways of applying learning strategies.”

“Studying with a diverse group of educators and being exposed to different points of view and perspectives on the curriculum.”

“The workshops were not only practical but applicable to my daily work.”

“They used experiential learning methods, were immediately applicable to practice, and had the built-in flexibility to be broadly applicable to a wide variety of situations.”

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# Relevance and Application

# White People and Transformative PD

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## Relevant to my interests/ position

- Content specific
- University/college programs or workshops
- Workshops/presentations by colleagues/peers

## Applicable to my daily practice

- Experiential/hands-on
- Access to knowledgeable people



# Acknowledgement and Connection

# Acknowledgment & Connection = Affirmation

2019 study published by *Harvard Business Review* suggests that success in the face of systemic discrimination often begins with affirming one's own potential. When people believe in their ability to grow, they make decisions that reflect this conviction, such as investing in their potential, focusing on their unique strengths, and discovering new paths to success and fulfillment that align with their core values and leadership goals.

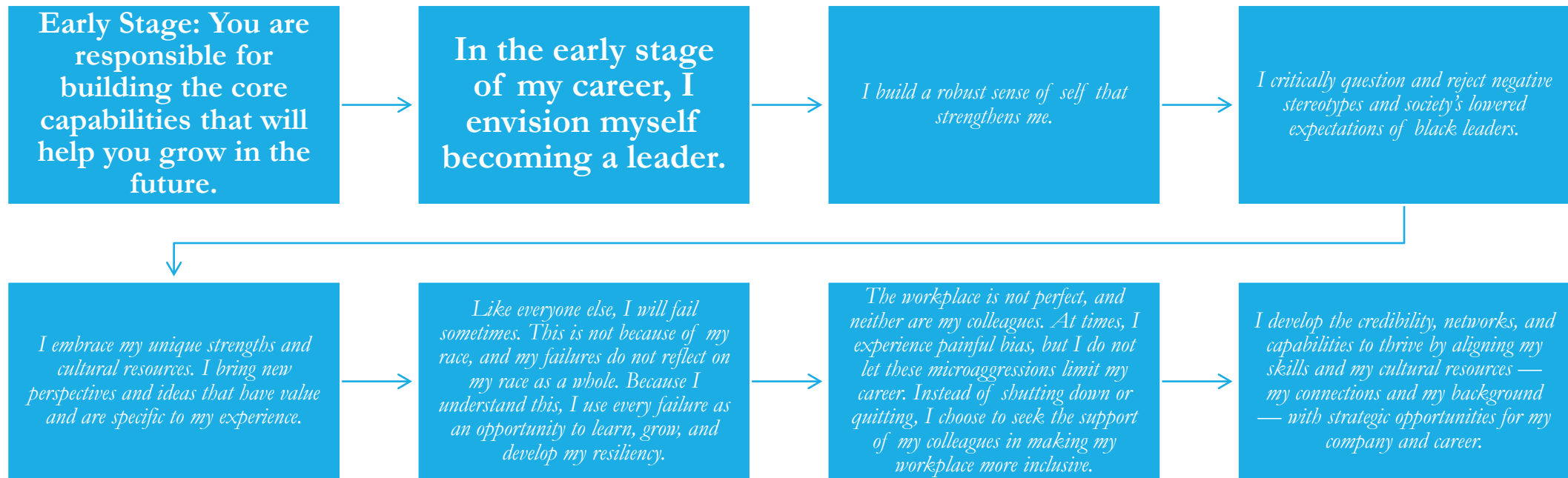
Study offers a set of self-affirmations developed from interviews and surveys we have conducted with African-American professionals. The practice of self-affirmation has broad benefits, not just in helping people to develop a healthy self-identity but also to limit the detrimental effects of identity threats like negative stereotyping and overt discrimination.

Different affirmations for different stages of a black professional's career.

[“Success Comes From Affirming Your Potential,” Roberts & Mayo \(2019\)](#)

# Black Leadership Self-Affirmations

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# Black Leadership Self-Affirmations

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**Middle Stage: The middle part of your career is important for expanding your expertise beyond your areas of specialization and gaining visibility to assume leadership roles.**



**In the middle stage of my career, I am positioned to grow into greater leadership roles.**



*I recognize that as my core strengths and talents increase, I can be a stronger contributor in my organization. I draw on these attributes to position myself for increased responsibility and greater visibility and impact.*



*At times I question whether I have to choose between my career success and my authentic self. I want to be able to wear my hair and clothes in a manner that I feel is professionally authentic, discuss my personal interests and commitments with my colleagues and supervisors, and honor my unique background and experiences. For the sake of my health, I make choices that promote my ability to be authentic at work — whether that is expressing myself through my appearance or my language — and I am accountable for those decisions. This is the paradox of authenticity. I embrace this with courage.*



*Sometimes, even when I am in a position of authority, my authority is challenged or contested. I choose to not let this make me feel less secure in my leadership. I learn from feedback and others' perceptions, but I do not let them limit my leadership potential.*



*I proactively cultivate vibrant networks — both existing and new — in which my peers and mentors support my growth. I know I can't necessarily rely on existing networks to provide me with everything I need to grow and develop; too often, marginalized people are excluded from these places. While I do participate in existing networks if possible, I also construct my own spaces where I can draw support while I learn and grow.*

# Black Leadership Self- Affirmations

Late Stage: You may shift your focus from personal development to developing others.

In the late stage of my career, I use my leadership, power, and influence for good.

*I face the same challenges as other leaders when it comes to fighting biases, ethical breaches, and abuses of power. At the same time, because of my race, I am held to higher standards and face greater scrutiny. I continue to uphold my integrity by being mindful of my decisions about how I lead, and I use my powers to uplift others.*

*My power and influence give me the opportunity to design and implement more inclusive leadership practices, regardless of my job title or formal responsibilities. I use this opportunity to clear the pathway to leadership for others.*

*I willingly pass on experience, knowledge, and credibility to expand opportunities for the rising generation. In so doing, my legacy is strengthened.*

*I seek out people on the margins of the organization and find more ways to both include them in conversations and bring their names to meetings in which they might not otherwise have been mentioned. It is my personal responsibility to make open, public commitments to developing these future leaders.*

# People of Color: Transformative PD

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**ACKNOWLEDGES** THEIR  
LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL AND  
**CONNECTS** TO THEIR  
PERSONAL GOALS



**ACKNOWLEDGES** THEIR  
IDENTITY AND **CONNECTS**  
THEM TO OTHERS WHO  
SHARE THEIR IDENTITY.



**ACKNOWLEDGES** THEIR  
EXPERTISE AND **CONNECTS**  
THEM TO EXPERTS.

ACKNOWLEDGES  
IDENTITY/  
CONNECTS TO  
OTHERS WHO  
SHARE IDENTITY

“Throughout the sessions I was able to more fully develop my own understanding of my identity and how it impacts the classrooms in which I teach.”

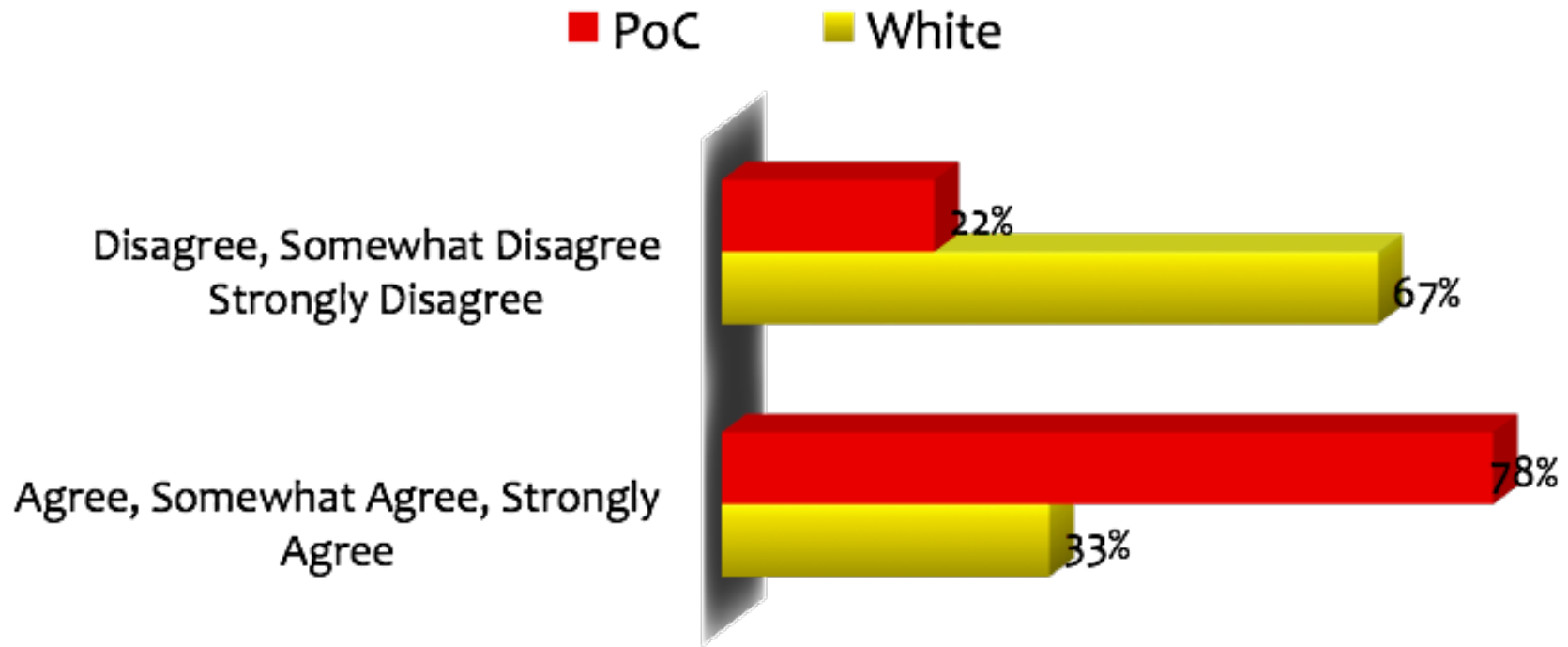
“Real life issues facing administrators and or specifically admin of color.”

“ [They were] leadership programs delivered and designed by people of color.”

“Because I am with people who have similar experiences and find a shared attitude.”

“POCC provides me with the ability to interact with people who share a lot of commonalities. It helps me to feel empowered.”

“Community of peers with knowledge, expertise, and mutual affinity group experience.”



AGREE OR  
DISAGREE?

THE MOST TRANSFORMATIONAL  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT I HAVE  
EXPERIENCED HAS OCCURRED IN AFFINITY  
SPACES

# ACKNOWLEDGES LEADERSHIP/CONNECTS TO GOALS

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“They were ultimately about helping me grow into the profession and myself.”



“Got 360 feedback, so [I] learned that others saw me as a leader.”



“The NYSAIS workshop put me into a leadership position that demanded strategic thinking and planning.”



“Interschool Leadership Institute made me reflect and learn how to harness my leadership in my school.”



“The ELI program...pushed me to think of myself as a school leader. The fact that I am a part of a cohort made up of current school leaders is also inspiring, because we are capable of doing incredible things with our power.”



“They helped me crystallize my plans for the future and to light a fire under my resolve.”

ACKNOWLEDGES  
EXPERTISE/  
CONNECTS TO  
EXPERTS

“Being an Affinity Group Facilitator at POCC allowed me to network and present myself as a leader to a large group of people.”

“Making powerful connections with sitting heads who are committed to mentoring and "sponsoring" new leaders.”

“The opportunity to network and receive mentorship from colleagues. The ability to gain resources and to make connections that help to fortify me both personally and professionally.”

“They offered me an opportunity to see first-hand the challenges that administrators face as well as understand their journey's in getting there.”

“Both of these experiences provided opportunities to learn from current leaders and practitioners. They also provided networking opportunities to meet other like-minded educators.”

“The Institute immediately connected participants with similar career aspirations and provided numerous opportunities to connect with heads and other school leaders.”

“The networking opportunities really helped me learn from other educators and leaders of color. Many of the people who attended were leaders within their school, whether administrative or otherwise.”

“The relationship that I have cultivated with my mentor has proven to be invaluable.”

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# The Power of Purposeful Storytelling



# Storytelling As a Leadership Tool

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There are five common situations for Storytelling in the workplace:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/danschawbel/2012/08/13/how-to-use-storytelling-as-a-leadership-tool/#1cc6e3075e8e>

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1. Inspiring the organization

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2. Setting a vision

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3. Teaching important lessons

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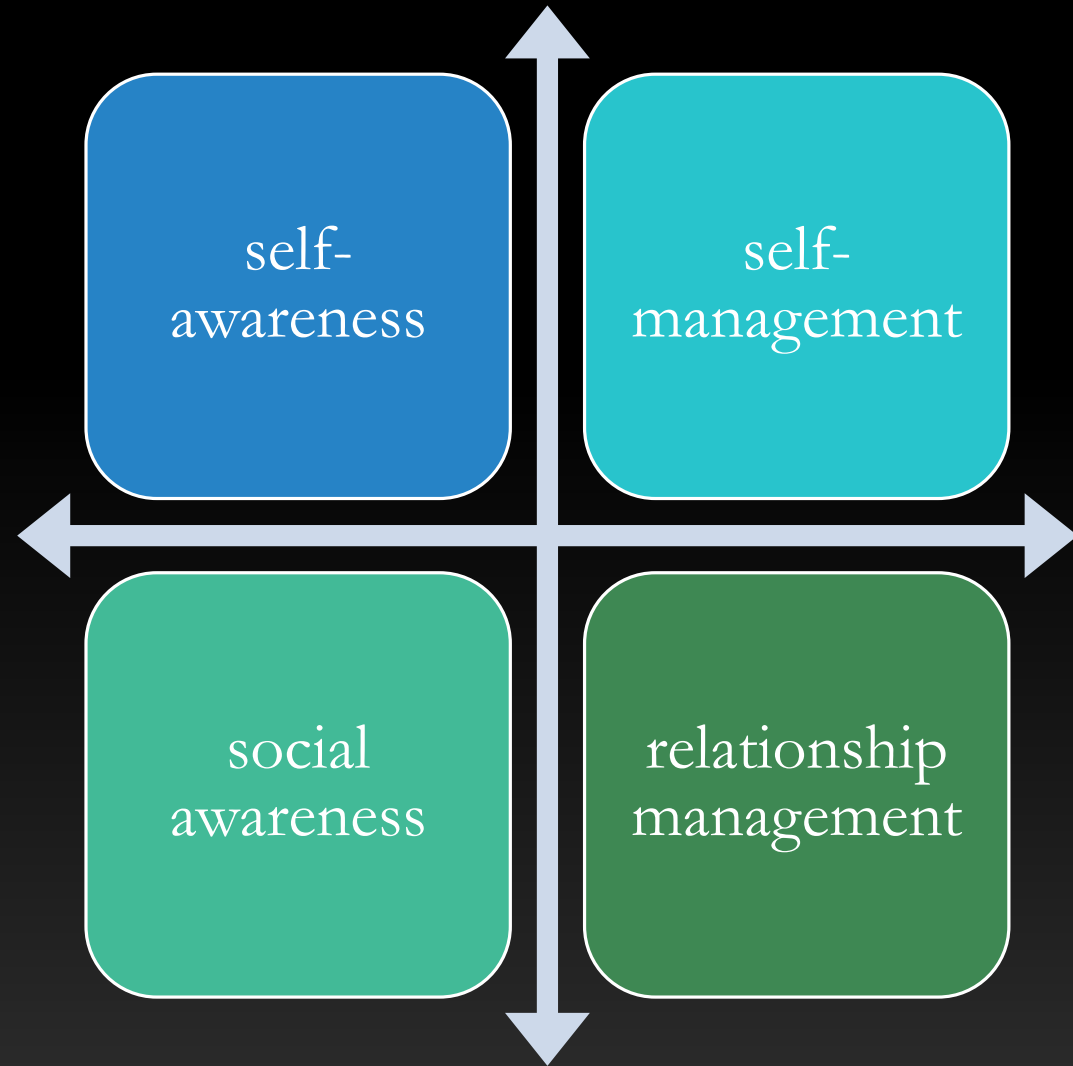
4. Defining culture and values

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5. Explaining who you are and what you believe

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Emotional  
Intelligence  
competencies  
displayed in  
storytelling



# The Skills Mismatch

There is a mismatch between the skills of top talent, and the skills that companies are seeking

The greatest imbalances exist in the areas of interpersonal skills and communication

Hard skills are taught; soft skills are cultivated

According to Daniel Goleman: When IQ and technical skills are similar, emotional intelligence accounts for 90% of what makes people move up the success ladder.

*(Beheshti, Forbes Magazine, 2018)*

Soft skills  
ARE  
hard skills

The four most in-demand soft skills are within:

Leadership

Communication

Collaboration

Time  
management

In order to maximize hard skills, you must be able to read a room, manage relationships, and demonstrate social awareness.

“Great leaders need to be able to do really hard things – change a strategic direction, sell a long-valued division, lay off employees—with... a deft touch.” -- Jeffrey Immelt, General Electric CEO

# Purposeful Storytelling

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Choose a partner

Decide who will  
be A and who is  
B

Each participant  
selects one  
question to  
answer



Educationally speaking, what keeps you up at night?



When have you felt a sense of community as a POC in your school? When have you felt isolated?



How does your identity impact the way you work?



What is a misconception that people have about you?



What is a problem or conflict in your school that you can help address?



Identify a transformative PD experience. Why do you feel this way?

# Questions

# Debrief

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HOW DID THAT FEEL  
FOR YOU?



WHAT WAS THAT LIKE TO  
LISTEN AND NOT BE ABLE TO  
ASK QUESTIONS?

When you tell a purposeful story, you:



Must figure out what parts of your identity you want to share



Articulate what's important



Help the listener understand about who you are and how you think



Process the experience as you speak and flesh out possible areas for growth



Keep the learning going



# Takeaways for Heads and Hiring Leaders

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You are not singularly exempt from the forces of socialization



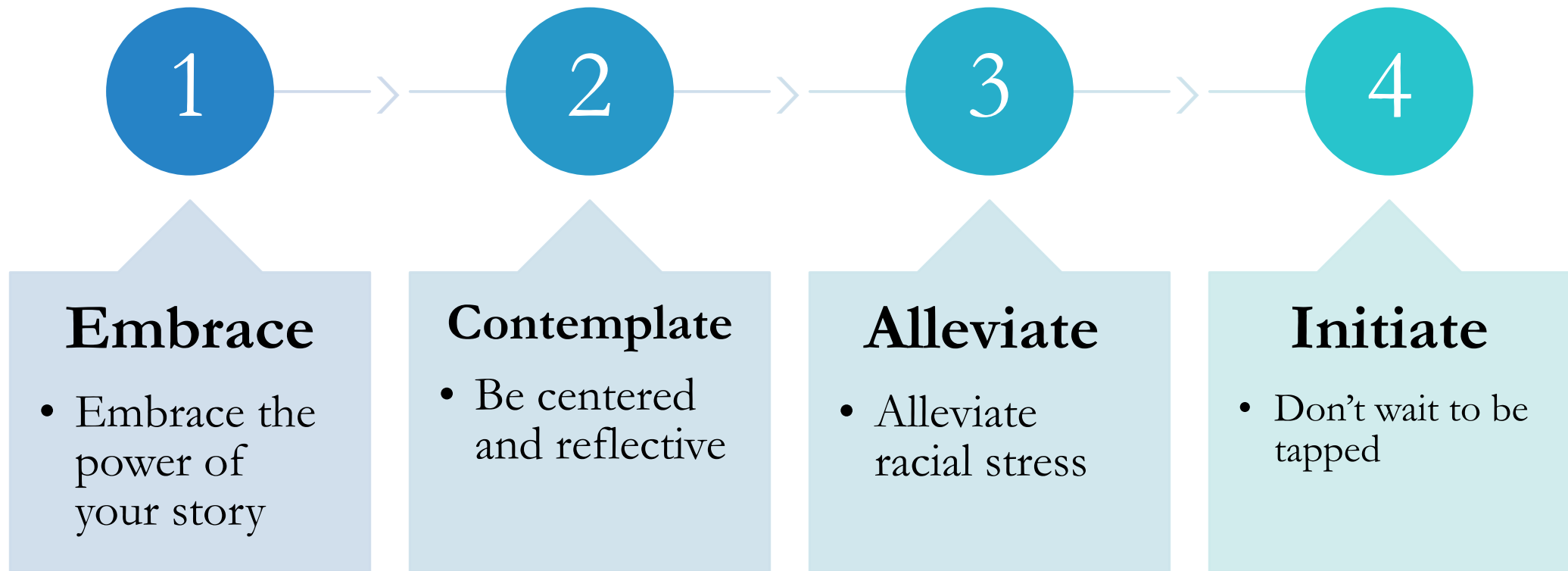
Change where you are looking for leadership



Make room

# Takeaways from POC seeking leadership

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Don't lead with,  
“How much more will  
I be paid???”

# In closing...

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## FOR ASPIRING LEADERS... FOR HEADS AND SENIOR ADMINISTRATORS...

- Remember why you got into this
- Be the change you seek
- Recognize your biases
- Make "expanded racial diversity in leadership" part of your legacy

Questions?  
Feel free  
to reach  
out!

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