

# Glossary

**adaptive expertise:** A broad construct that encompasses a range of cognitive, motivational, and personality-related components, as well as habits of mind and dispositions. Generally, people demonstrate adaptive expertise when they are able to efficiently solve previously encountered tasks and generate new procedures for new tasks.

**agency:** The idea that people have the capacity to take action, craft and carry out plans, and make informed decisions based on a growing base of knowledge. Also, the street data metric offered as an alternative to satellite metrics and in relationship to a pedagogy of voice.

**anti-Black racism:** A feature of white supremacy, anti-Blackness is a two-part formation that both strips Blackness of value (dehumanizes) and systematically marginalizes Black people. This form of racism is overt, historical, and embedded in all of our institutions. Beneath anti-Black racism lies the covert structural and systemic racism that is held in place by anti-Black policies, institutions, and ideologies. Anti-Blackness is also the disregard for Black institutions and policies privileging outside practices over Black traditions.

**antiracist, anti-bias adult culture:** A culture in which educators develop the will, skill, vulnerability, and courage to uproot systemic racism and deep-rooted biases.

**antiracist stance:** The idea that racial groups are equals, none needs developing, and the commitment to support policy that reduces racial inequity (Kendi, 2019).

**artifact:** Anything created by human beings that yields information or insight into the culture and/or society of its creator and users.

**audacious hope:** An idea that educators must reconnect to collective experience by struggling alongside one another, sharing in the victories and the pain (Duncan-Andrade, 2009).

**banking model of education:** A pedagogical model that positions the teacher as subject and active participant and the students as passive objects. Education is viewed as a process of depositing knowledge into students' brains, with little to no attention to students' preexisting knowledge and cultural schema (Freire, 1970).

**belonging:** A component of agency in which students feel deeply connected to their school, classroom(s), peers, and teachers and can say, "I see myself, and I am seen and loved here."

**BIPOC:** Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) is used to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African Americans) people have, which shapes the experiences of and relationship to white supremacy for all people of color within a U.S. context (<https://www.thebipocproject.org/>, 2020).

**blanket equity:** Investing in a program or curriculum rather than building the capacity of your people to address equity challenges as complex and ongoing places of inquiry.

**boomerang equity:** Investing time and resources to understand your equity challenges but reverting back to previous mental models in ways that lead to unintentionally harmful solutions (e.g., measuring progress toward equity solely through state testing exams).

**co-generative dialogues (or cogens):** A pedagogical practice of simple, informal conversations between a

teacher and a small group of students with the goal of providing feedback and co-generating a plan of action. Can also be adapted for leaders to use with staff (Emdin, 2017).

**coherence:** The act or state of binding one thing with another; in schools, a shared depth of understanding about the purpose and nature of the work in the minds and behaviors of educational actors, individually and especially collectively (Fullan & Quinn, 2015).

**colorism:** Prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a darker skin tone, which can also result in exclusion of those with lighter skin tone.

**community cultural wealth:** An array of knowledges, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and used by communities of color to survive and resist racism and other forms of oppression (Yosso, 2005).

**complex challenges:** The solution to the challenge is not known and can only be seen or known during or after the action unfolds. Equity challenges are complex in nature. There is no set of steps or algorithm that will tell you how to respond.

**complicated challenges:** The solution to the challenge is not immediately obvious but can be known prior to taking action. These challenges are hard to solve but can be addressed by assembling the right technical expertise.

**courage:** A mindset connected to the move phase of the equity transformation cycle, signifying the need to act without complete information, the perfect design, or a predetermined outcome.

**creativity:** A mindset connected to the reimagine phase of the equity transformation cycle, signifying use of the collective imagination and/or original ideas to transform student experience.

**critical pedagogy:** A teaching approach popularized by Paolo Freire that helps students question and challenge the status quo, develop habits of mind that go beneath surface meaning, uncover root causes of oppression, engage in deep thinking, and create counter-narratives about their lived experiences.

**culturally responsive education (CRE):** A pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of instruction and calls for deep cognitive engagement of learners whose

culture and experiences have been relegated to the margins (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

**culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP):** Dr. Geneva Gay defines culturally responsive pedagogy as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, 2002). CRP points toward teaching practices that attend to specific cultural differences among students, including values, traditions, languages, communication and learning styles, and relational norms.

**culture circle:** First described by Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, Emdin defines a culture circle as an informal space where adults who were learning to read and write came together to share their understandings of the world and their place within it (Emdin, 2017).

**culture of compliance:** A culture focused solely on satellite data, program implementation, and power-hoarding or top-down mandates.

**culture of public learning:** A culture that centers student voice, cultivates curiosity, and moves professional learning beyond the low bar of implementing “best practices” to a high bar of cultivating practitioner knowledge about how their students learn.

**curiosity:** A mindset connected to the uncover phase of the equity transformation cycle, signifying a strong desire to know or learn something and a willingness to dig beneath the surface to identify root causes.

**cypher:** A rap cypher is a codified style of communication that many urban students of color use on street corners to engage in playful, dynamic dialogue (Emdin, 2017).

**deep listening:** A type of listening that aims to relieve the suffering of the other person, supporting personal healing and the development of relational trust (Safir, 2017b).

**default practices:** Practices that we automatically do.

**defense:** A defense involves a student revising and preparing over weeks or even months to share polished pieces of academic work before a committee or “panel.” Panels typically include peers, teachers, a significant adult, and a community member.

**doing equity:** Treating equity as a series of tools, strategies, and compliance tasks versus a whole-person,

whole-system change process linked to culture, identity, and healing.

**efficacy:** A component of agency in which students feel able to identify what matters to them, take action, and say “I can make a difference”; the ability to produce a desired or intended result.

**emergence:** The theory that simple rules interact with one another in complex ways to shape a change process, the outcome of which cannot be predicted.

**empiricism:** A theory developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth century emphasizing the role of sensory evidence and patterns in the formation of ideas rather than innate ideas or traditions.

**epistemology:** The theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope. Epistemology is the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion.

**equity:** An approach to ensuring equally high outcomes for all by removing the predictability of success or failure that currently correlates with any racial, social, economic, or cultural factor.

**equity-centered transformation cycle (ETC):** A fluid yet structured process that centers street data in a journey of listening deeply to voices at the margins, uncovering root causes of inequity, reimagining current approaches in partnership with stakeholders, and moving a change agenda.

**equity learning walk:** An informal series of classroom observations with an explicit equity lens. The learning walk team might look for patterns of participation broken down by race and gender; patterns of teacher feedback (i.e., affirmative versus negative interactions with students); small-group peer interactions that reflect implicit biases; or actual use of academic language in classes with English language learners.

**equity transformation cycle:** The equity transformation cycle (ETC) is the central process tool in this book. The cycle represents a fluid yet structured process that is grounded in core values—radical inclusion, curiosity, creativity, and courage—and centers street-level data. As you move through the cycle, you will learn to listen deeply to voices at the margins, uncover the root causes of inequities, reimagine your current approaches in partnership with key stakeholders, and move a change agenda with courage.

**equity warrior:** Nesting equity within a single champion and holder of the vision.

**false generosity:** Paulo Freire’s concept defines false generosity as charity that targets the symptoms of an unjust society. Examples include donating to shelters for the homeless or creating a foundation to eradicate malaria. False generosity isn’t false because it doesn’t help people; it can and often does save lives. Rather, it’s “false” because, by addressing symptoms rather than underlying causes, it functions to maintain oppression.

**focus:** The ability to know where we are going as a community and reinforce it consistently through our messages.

**fractals:** Never-ending patterns that replicate across different scales and every level of the system—for example, the tiniest broccoli flower mirrors the largest floret.

**fundamental attribution error:** Also known as correspondence bias, fundamental attribution error is the tendency to explain someone’s behavior based on internal factors, such as personality or disposition, and to underestimate situational explanations.

**graduate profile:** An accessible, succinct description of what every graduate must know, understand, and be able to do. It can be developed at every level of the educational system.

**holism:** A tenet of Indigenous epistemology, holism helps us account for the whole of the system and the individual learner—the emotional, spiritual, physical, intellectual, and cultural dimensions—rather than fragment into parts. The theory that parts of a whole are in intimate interconnection, such that they cannot exist independently of the whole or cannot be understood without reference to the whole, which is thus regarded as greater than the sum of its parts. Holism is often applied to mental states, language, and ecology.

**iceberg:** Designed by systems theorist Peter Senge, the iceberg protocol helps us move from an event we might typically react to into the deeper waters of patterns, trends, systemic structures, and mental models that shape our thinking. When we encounter an iceberg, only a small portion (that which surfaces above sea level) is visible from a distance.

**identity:** A component of the agency framework signifying that a student feels their ways of being, learning, and knowing in the world are valued.

**implicit bias:** Implicit biases stem from implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious that cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. These associations are activated involuntarily and without individual awareness as they develop over the course of a lifetime, beginning at an early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages.

**improvement science:** A problem-solving approach in education that encourages practitioners to test new ideas in rapid cycles—often referred to as plan-do-study-act (PDSA)—in which they develop a change idea, test it, collect data on it, and reflect on whether it worked.

**instructional rounds:** A structured practice that takes participants through a robust process of observing, analyzing, and making meaning of classroom street data (City et al., 2009).

**intentional practices:** Practices that we choose to do in order to transform the way we show up in the world and that are an essential element of antiracist work. Intentional practices give us the opportunity to increase choice and alignment with values (Maina & Haines, 2008).

**intersectionality:** Intersectionality is a theory and way of framing the various interactions between race, gender, and other identities as well as explaining how systems of oppression interact with each other in complex ways to impact people's lived experiences.

**learning spirit:** An Indigenous concept that spirits travel with individuals and guide their learning, providing inspiration and the unrealized potential to be who we are.

**literacy:** The ability to read, write, and express oneself; competence or knowledge in a specified area.

**map data:** Data that hover closer to the ground, providing a GPS of social-emotional, cultural, and learning trends within a school community. Map data include literacy levels gathered through “running records” where teachers listen to and code students reading aloud, rubric scores on common assessments, and surveys that reveal student, parent, or staff perception and satisfaction levels.

**margin:** Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes that the metaphor of the margin has served as a

powerful symbol for understanding social inequality, oppression, disadvantage, and power as well as hidden sources of wisdom. Xicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa invoked the idea of the *frontera*, or borderland, for this same purpose, while African American author and activist bell hooks wrote of the “radical possibility of ‘choosing the margin’ as a site of belonging as much as a site of struggle and resistance” (Smith, 2012, pp. 204–205). Far from places of weakness or impoverishment, the margins are sites of deep cultural wealth and community wisdom.

**mastery:** A component of agency in which students are able to build knowledge, demonstrate their understanding as a learner, and show what they know in non-traditional ways.

**mature empathy:** The ability to form a mental picture of another person's experience by drawing on one's own schemas (Safir, 2017b).

**mental models:** Personal, internal representations of reality that people use to interact with the world around them, constructed by individuals based on their unique life experiences, perceptions, and understandings of the world (Jones, Ross, et al., 2011).

**microaggressions:** Subtle, everyday slights or insults that convey a hostile or derogatory message to targeted persons based on identity as part of a marginalized group.

**mixed methods:** A form of research that integrates quantitative and qualitative methods to enact a more holistic approach.

**navel-gazing equity:** Keeping the equity work at the level of self-reflection and failing to penetrate the instructional core and school systems and structures (e.g., master schedule, tracking).

**neuroception:** A scientific term describing how our neural circuits perceive and distinguish, often automatically, whether situations or people are safe, dangerous, or life-threatening.

**observer:** A person who watches or notices something.

**oral tradition:** A form of human communication wherein knowledge, art, ideas, and cultural material is received, preserved, and transmitted orally from one generation to another. The transmission is through speech or song and may include folktales, ballads, chants, prose, or verses.

**orientation to vision:** A leadership stance in which we define, coach toward, and message a vivid picture of success (Safir, 2017b).

**outlier syndrome:** A systemic pattern in which a few exceptional teachers work their magic in a handful of classrooms.

**pedagogy of compliance:** A pedagogy that continues to dominate the majority of American classrooms, particularly at a secondary level, characterized by lecture-style instruction, students in rows looking toward the teacher as epistemological expert, and teachers carrying the cognitive load.

**pedagogy of voice:** A pedagogy that emerges at the intersection of critical pedagogy and culturally responsive education, offering an instructional technology and a way of being that shifts the locus of learning and power to the student's voice. A pedagogy of voice transcends numbers and metrics to create street-level learning experiences that foster healing, cognitive growth, and agency.

**peeling the onion:** Peeling the onion protocol provides a structured way to look at a problem without immediately trying to solve it. It includes a series of timed steps that help you get to the heart of an issue.

**performance assessment:** The demonstration and evaluation of applied skills in authentic settings.

**positivism:** A philosophical system that holds that every rationally justifiable assertion can be scientifically verified or is capable of logical or mathematical proof and that therefore rejects metaphysics and theism.

**power-sharing:** An antidote to white supremacy culture's power hoarding; a stance of redistributing power, access, and voice to others, particularly those currently at the margins.

**program-itis:** A phenomenon whereby layer upon layer of underfunded mandates are piled on teachers as demands to personalize learning for an increasingly diverse student body mount (Berry, 2020).

**public learning:** A transformation model for professional learning that centers student voice and teacher agency. An opportunity to shine a light on a dilemma or challenge and think it through collaboratively with the benefit of street data.

**qualitative research:** An approach that investigates questions about why and how people behave in the ways that they do, mining for insight into the messy interplay of human relationships. Qualitative researchers collect and analyze non-numerical data in an effort to gain insight into social conditions and behaviors.

**quantitative research:** Attempt to explain patterns through the collection and statistical analysis of numerical data.

**radical inclusion:** A mindset connected to the listening phase of the equity transformation cycle, described as the intentional act of interrupting inequity where it lives by recognizing the multiplicity of stories, truths, their proximities, their intersections, and the people who own the stories (Ortiz Guzman, 2017).

**reimagining:** The act of reinterpreting (an event, work of art, etc.) imaginatively; rethinking.

**relational capital:** The resource that leaders accrue when they take time to listen to and convey authentic care and curiosity toward others. If relationships function as currency in schools, relational capital is like a big savings account of trust and goodwill (Safir, 2017b).

**routine expertise:** Knowing the best practices, staying on the pacing guide, and fixating on standardized test scores as the primary indicators of learning. A routine expert can master procedures in order to become highly efficient and accurate (but not flexible or adaptable in situations that are outside the routine). People who are routine experts can accelerate efficiency through well-practiced routines.

**safe-to-fail experiments:** Small, four- to six-week "hacks" that disrupt business-as-usual and give you fresh street data to study.

**satellite data:** Data that hover far above the classroom and tell an important but incomplete story of equity. Satellite data encompass broad-brush quantitative measures like test scores, attendance patterns, and graduation rates, as well as adult indicators like teacher retention, principal attrition, and parent participation rates.

**scientific colonialism:** An approach to scientific inquiry in which the center of gravity for the acquisition of knowledge about a people is located outside of that people's lived reality (McDougal III, 2014).

**sense of purpose:** The quality of having a definite reason for being.

**sense of self:** The way a person thinks about and views his or her traits, beliefs, and purpose within the world.

**settler colonialism:** The removal and erasure of Indigenous peoples in order to take the land for use by settlers in perpetuity. Settler-colonialism plays out in the erasure of Indigenous presence and the ongoing dispossession of land and other resources from Indigenous peoples.

**seventh generation principle:** A principle based on an ancient Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) philosophy that the decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world seven generations into the future.

**showing strength:** A component of the warm demander framework in which a person holds the line on the vision and does not capitulate to deficit language or distorted views of student behavior.

**siloeing equity:** Locating the equity work in a separate and siloed policy, team, or body.

**single-point rubric:** A reflection that breaks down the components of an assignment into different criteria but only describes the criteria for proficiency; it does not attempt to list all the ways a student could fall short, nor does it specify how a student could exceed expectations (Gonzalez, 2014).

**simplcity:** A way to navigate complex realities with simple rules, by identifying a small number of core factors that constitute your focus (the simple part), recognizing that the challenge is how to make them coalesce in actual learning spaces (the complex part) (Fullan, 2009).

**spray and pray equity:** Engaging “equity experts” to drop in for a training with no ongoing plan for learning and capacity-building.

**spirit murdering:** The denial of inclusion, protection, safety, nurturance, and acceptance because of fixed yet fluid and moldable structures of racism in schools (Love, 2013).

**stereotype threat:** A theory developed by social psychologist Claude Steele to describe how the performance of women, people of color, and others often decreases in the face of the psychic threat of being viewed as inferior. The perceived risk of confirming

negative stereotypes about one’s racial, ethnic, gender, or cultural group that leads to diminished performance on tasks and increasing privatization of one’s practice (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

**storientation:** A concept signifying close attention to the role of stories in equitable school transformation (Safir, 2017b).

**strategic listening:** A style of equity-centered coaching that employs reflective questions and a bias toward experimental action to help the person build capacity and agency (Safir, 2017b).

**street data (or street-level data):** The qualitative, systematic, and experiential data that emerges at eye level and on lower frequencies when we train our brains to discern it. Street data is asset-based, building on the tenets of culturally responsive education by helping educators look for what’s right in our students, schools, and communities instead of seeking out what’s wrong. Street data embodies both an ethos and a change methodology that will transform how we analyze, diagnose, and assess everything from student learning to district improvement to policy. It offers us a new way to think about, gather, and make meaning of data.

**structural equity:** Redesigning systems and structures (e.g. master schedule) without investing in the deeper personal, interpersonal, and cultural shifts.

**superficial equity:** Failing to take time to build equity knowledge and fluency, leading to behavioral shifts without understanding deeper meaning or historical context.

**systemic oppression:** When laws and policies lead to unequal treatment and disadvantaging of a specific group of people based on their identity (gender, race, class, sexual orientation, language, etc.).

**systemic racism:** A theory that addresses individual, institutional, and structural forms of racial inequality and was shaped over time by scholars like Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois, Oliver Cox, Anna Julia Cooper, Kwame Ture, Frantz Fanon, and Patricia Hill Collins, among others. Sociologist Joe Feagin built on this legacy to offer this framing: Systemic racism includes the complex array of antiblack practices, the unjustly gained political-economic power of whites, the continuing economic and other resource inequalities along racial lines, and the white racist ideologies



and attitudes created to maintain and rationalize white privilege and power.

**tokenizing equity:** Asking leaders of color to hold, drive, and symbolically represent equity without providing support and resources nor engaging the entire staff in the work.

**trap:** A mechanism or device designed to catch and retain.

**trope:** A recurring theme we've seen happen before.

**uncover:** A phase of the equity transformation cycle in which educators mine the street data to identify root causes and/or discover something previously unknown or misunderstood.

**vulnerability:** Defined by qualitative researcher and author Brené Brown as an unstable feeling of uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure that we get when we step out of our comfort zone or do something that forces us to loosen control (B. Brown, 2015).

**warm demander leaders:** Leaders, such as superintendents, directors, coaches, principals, assistant principals, who expect a great deal of their colleagues, convince them of their capacity to grow, and use street-level data and adaptive coaching moves to transform mindsets and practices. Rather than call people out, warm demanders call folks in and up to the work of equity.

**warm demander teachers:** Teachers who expect a great deal of their students, convince them of their own brilliance, and help them to reach their potential in a disciplined and structured environment (Delpit, 2013).

**well-being:** A state in which educators and students experience healing, agency, joy, and connection as they dismantle oppressive practices and structures and make deep learning available for all. An experience of holism as integration of mind, body, spirit, and identity.

**white fragility:** Feelings of discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted

around racial inequality and injustice (DiAngelo, 2018).

**white supremacy:** The global system that confers unearned power and privilege on those who become identified as white while conferring disprivilege and disempowerment on those who become identified as people of color.

**white supremacy culture (WSC):** Ideas, thoughts, beliefs, habits, and actions grounded in whiteness that are perceived to be superior to the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of people and communities of color. One does not have to be a white supremacist or even white to embody or enact white supremacist culture (Jones & Okun, 2001).

**wise feedback:** A way of providing students of color with structured, empowering explanations that mitigate stereotype threat and reduce the possibility that feedback is experienced as biased (Cohen, Steele, & Ross, 1999). This process includes three instructional elements: describe the nature of the feedback being offered; emphasize and explain the high standards used to evaluate the student work and organize the feedback; explicitly state a belief that the student has the skills needed to meet those standards.

**working toward equity:** A practice that requires us to (1) acknowledge that our systems, practices, and narratives are designed to perpetuate disparities in outcomes for non-dominant students; (2) deliberately identify barriers that predict success or failure and actively disrupt them; (3) consistently examine personal identity, bias, and both personal and collective contributions to the creation and/or reproduction of inequitable practices; (4) (re)allocate resources (tools, time, money, people, support) to ensure every child gets what they need to succeed to thrive socially, emotionally, and intellectually; and (5) cultivate the unique gifts, talents, and interests that every person possesses.