

Systems Thinking for Leaders Who Want Different Results

Leadership II - Grades K-12 - Day 5

Describe Your Leadership Challenge

How would you describe the situation as you are currently experiencing it? Are there any recent events or activities that have occurred regarding this challenge?

How would you describe the ideal for this challenge and the reality as it exists now? How wide is that gap and in what ways?

What successes have you experienced that could be leveraged?

Who are some of the major players involved? What would they say about this challenge?

Reflect and Write

What does this mean for you as a leader?

Consider your Mental Models analysis: In what ways do low expectations, racism and bias play a role in the challenge you face?

What messages or actions have you done in the past? Name them. What about this needs to change?

What do you now think about the way you have been leading this work?

The Iceberg Model

Event – What happened?

This is what happened to raise the issue to prominence for you.

Patterns and Trends – What has been happening?

If we look just below the event level, we often notice patterns. Similar events have been taking place over time.

Underlying Structures - What sort of structures or processes might explain what's been happening?

When we ask, "What is causing the pattern we are observing?" the answer can include some kinds of structure.

Structures can include the following:

Physical things — like materials, class size, curriculum;

Organization — like leadership and team structures; access to specialists, coaches; time; Policies –

Policies — like classroom observation and evaluation protocols, rubrics, expectations; culture and discipline; RTI

Ritual — like "this is the way we've always done it;" things so immersed in the school that you don't even notice them anymore; field trips, special events, assemblies

Mental Models - What is the thinking that creates or allows these structures, patterns and events to occur?

Mental models are the attitudes, beliefs, morals, expectations, and values that allow structures to continue functioning as they are. These are the conscious and unconscious thoughts and deeply held assumptions that we often learn subconsciously from our society or family, drive our behaviors and decisions and maintain the structures to support all of this. This is where low expectations can live – even though we don't want them to.

Cultural and Institutional Values – What are the values that are instilled in the organization or community that are shaping this behavior?

These are the core beliefs and values that are embedded in our self-definition and in our culture(s) and institutions. These values set-up and maintain our Mental Models.

The Iceberg Model

