

## Addressing the Leadership Opportunity Gap:

Improving Access to Student Leadership Opportunities for Traditionally Underserved Students  
**NAWD 2017**

Randy Heath

Director, Chinook Middle Level Camp (Association of Washington Student Leaders)

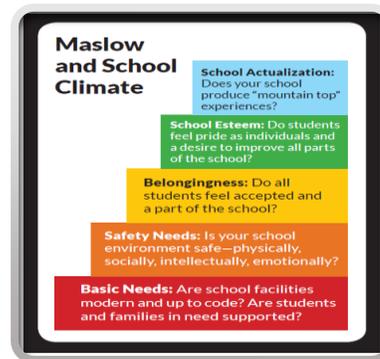
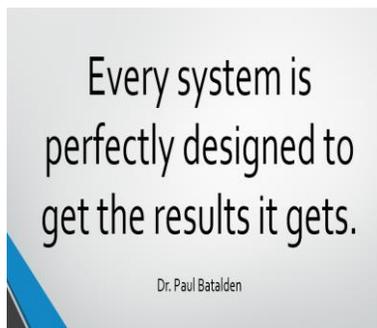
Executive Director Student and Family Support Services, Kent School District [Randall.heath@kent.k12.wa.us](mailto:Randall.heath@kent.k12.wa.us)

Twitter: @ranhea1751      LinkedIn: Randy Heath

### Opportunity Gap:

Acknowledging that there are still structural issues with institutionalized racism, sexism, disparate educational opportunities, and different treatments experienced by students of color or groups not in the majority. More specifically, opportunity gap refers to inputs – the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities.

Opportunity gaps can and have been closed through careful analysis of disaggregated student data, targeted strategies to provide equal opportunities to all students, and meaningful partnerships with communities and families. Students of underrepresented groups, their families, and communities bring assets to schools, have deep strengths, and when given equitable opportunities by the public school system, are not in the opportunity gap.



Do the students in your ASB, leadership classes and clubs accurately represent the demographics of your school?

### Factors that may be contributing to disproportional Student Leadership:

- Election Requirements
- Student Perceptions of current Student Leaders
- Staff Perceptions of Current Student Leaders
- Recruitment Process
- Scheduling of ASB meetings/classes
- Master Schedule

What are some common requirements to run for office or be selected to a participate in a leadership class?

How might institutional bias impact a student's ability to meet the requirements to access student leadership opportunities?

**Adverse discriminatory impact** - a policy may be neutral on its face, and is administered in an even-handed manner but has a disparate impact.

**How might having a leadership opportunity gap negatively impact the following:**

- Spirit Dress Up Days
- ASB Budget Decisions
- Assemblies
- New Student Orientation
- Fundraising Events

**How to identify if you have a leadership gap at your school:**

- Find your school's demographics
- Get a list of your student leaders.
- Use your student management system (example Skyward) to identify the following categories.
  - Start with - gender, race, ELL status, SPED status, Highly Capable status
  - Others to consider – Free/Reduced Lunch, Refugee Status, Athletes, Transient Student, etc.
- Enter into Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet
  - Sort and Calculate percentages
- Compare percentages to demographics of the school

**Steps you can start on Monday to make student leadership more inclusive at your school.**

- Know the demographics of your school.
- Seek input from your students through a writing assignment.
- Have different groups review the ASB constitution and identify what it says about how students are elected/selected.
- Form diverse focus groups. Review projects, assemblies, the ASB budget with them. Use their input to make changes. Share with them the changes made because of their input.
- Enlist colleagues to identify under-represented students with leadership potential and ask them to intentionally plant the seeds of leadership with these students.

**Caution**

- Don't create quotas
- Set all students up for success by providing differentiated supports (Think MTSS triangle)
- Don't do the work alone
- Don't think this will be easy, nothing worth doing ever was

**Agreements of Courageous Conversations**

From Glenn E. Singleton

Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools

- Stay Engaged
- Speak Your Truth
- Experience Discomfort
- Expect and Accept non-closure