



UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY

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# Refocusing Priorities for the Common Core: Literacy Instruction in Odds-Beating Diverse Elementary Schools

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# Introduction

- ▶ One goal of the CCSS: Change teaching and learning to close achievement gaps.

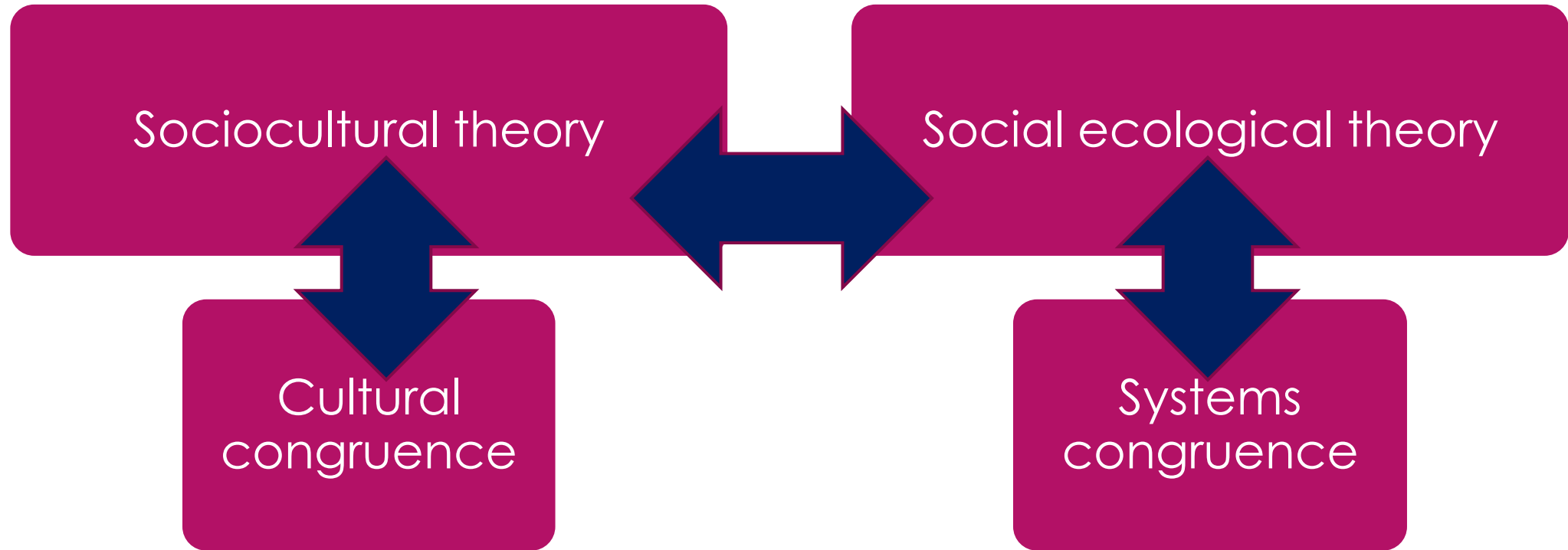
(Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin Anderson, & Rahman, 2009)

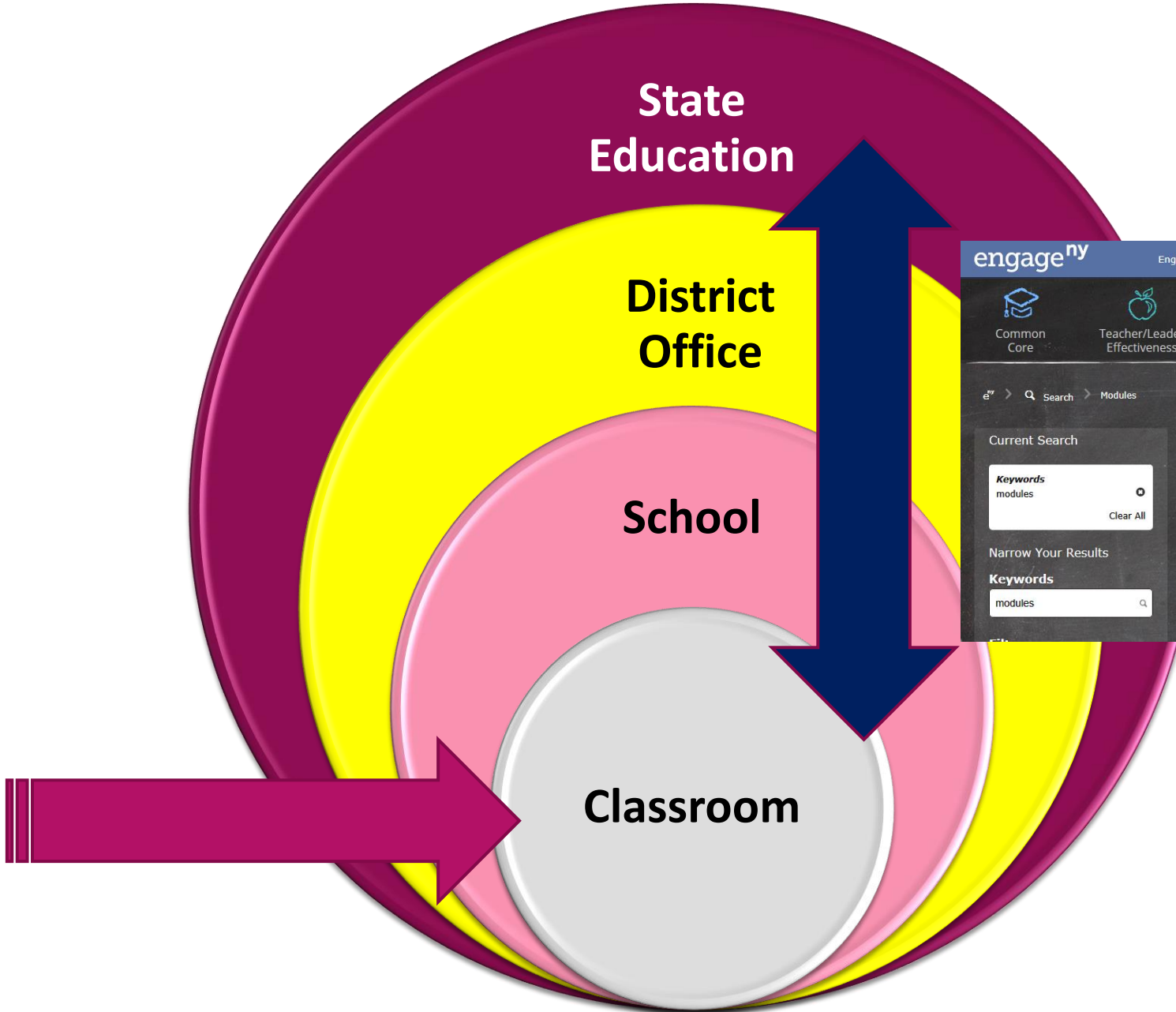
- ▶ Closing literacy gaps in elementary school can have long-lasting effects.

(Denton & West, 2002)

Odds-Beaters	Pseudonym	% Econ Dis.	% White	%ELLs
Suburban/small/med	Yellow Valley	>	>	>
Large Sub/Urban	Bay City	>	<	<
Large Sub/Urban	Goliad	>	<	>
Typical Performers	Pseudonym	% Econ Dis.	% White	%ELLs
Suburban/small/med	Sun Hollow	<	>	<
Large Sub/Urban	Paige City	=	>	<
<b>New York State Average</b>		50	48	8

# Framing





The screenshot shows the EngageNY website interface. At the top, the logo "engage<sup>ny</sup>" is visible, along with navigation links: EngagedVoices | EngageNY Portal | FAQ | About | Contact Us | Newsletter. A search bar is located on the right. Below the navigation is a row of icons for various resources: Common Core, Teacher/Leader Effectiveness, Data Driven Instruction, Video Library, Professional Development, and Parents and Families. The main content area shows search results for "modules". The current search is "modules" with 4964 results. There are three search filters: "Keywords modules" (with a "Clear All" button), "Narrow Your Results" (with a search box containing "modules"), and another "Keywords" search box. The results are displayed in a grid of three items, each with a thumbnail image and a title: "March 2015 NTI: Grades 6-12 Mathematics Turnkey Kit for", "May 2014 NTI: Grades K-5 Math Turnkey Kit for Network Teams -", and "February 2014 NTI: Grades P-5 Math Turnkey Kit for Network Teams -".

# Research Questions

- ▶ How do educators in diverse odds-beating elementary schools approach literacy instruction?
- ▶ How do they proceed with the adoption and implementation of the CCSS?
- ▶ How do they explain their students' performance on the CC ELA assessments?

## Findings: How OB diverse elementary schools differ from TP counterparts

1. Used integrative approaches to literacy instruction—combining the old with the new.
2. Took a “student-centered” approach to CCSS implementation, making decisions based on the local context and the needs of their particular students.
3. Sustained, embedded, and focused PD structured around developing instructional skills and knowledge related to CCSS.

# 1. Integrated Approaches to Literacy Instruction

- ▶ Odds beaters combined the old with the new
  - ▶ Integrated CCSS shifts into their balanced literacy programs already in place

***The Literacy Collaborative at the elementary level really kind of paved the way to the change.***

Superintendent, Yellow Valley



## In Contrast...

- ▶ Typical performers abandoned former practices and adopted curricular modules recommended by the state

***“There’s such a pressure to understand what they’re wanting us to teach, and then we have to go to what they’ve given us to teach [i.e. state curriculum modules] and how.”***

Paige City Teacher

## 2. Student-centered Approach

- ▶ Teams in odds beaters collaborated to modify instruction to serve diverse learners
  - ▶ Mainstream-special education; mainstream-ESL
  - ▶ Differentiation the focus

***“The ELA department is going to start and write their adapted modules of what they used last year and what worked and what didn’t and what they’re going to use going forward. The ESL teachers will sit with them and say, “This is what we have come up with.”***

District Supervisor of ESL, Goliad

## In Contrast...

- ▶ Typically performing schools demonstrated less collaboration leading to inconsistent differentiation

**“Well some did [a curricular module] and some people did whatever they’ve been doing for however long.”**

Sun Hollow Teacher

### 3. Targeted, sustained, emb

- ▶ PD in odds beaters focused on deep understanding of the CCSS.
  - ▶ Coordinated, focused
  - ▶ Sustained and embedded, e.g. through coaching

**“Our success comes from a lot of hard work, dedication, [and] professional development.”**

Yellow Valley teacher

## In Contrast...

- ▶ In typical performers, PD less focused
  - ▶ Teachers often confused about the CCSS themselves
  - ▶ Teachers still choosing what PD they want
  - ▶ Support staff often left out of PD

**“I think it [CCSS ELA PD] was a whole bunch of theories. People kind of picked and chose what they wanted to do in their classroom.”**

Paige City Teacher

# In Sum

Odds Beaters	Typical Performers
Ready for the CCSS changes	Reactive to the state mandate
Teachers expected to understand the CCSS and supported to modify C&I to help all students achieve them	Reliant on state supplied materials, and teachers expected to adopt them with high degrees of fidelity
Proactive in meeting local needs	Compliance driven

# Implications

- ▶ Schools where educators had focused on meeting individual student needs in their local context continued better-than-predicted performance on CCSS-aligned ELA assessments across multiple grades
- ▶ Schools where educators responded to CCSS mandates in a compliance driven way continued to achieve average performance on CCSS-aligned assessments.

# Thank you!

► This presentation and abstract can be downloaded at:

<http://www.albany.edu/nykids/>

Related materials in the back of the room

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