



RESILIENT, REPRESENTATIVE LEADERSHIP™ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An Urgent Need for More Resilient, Representative Leadership in Our Schools

Young people thrive, in school and in life, when they have access to safe, supportive, inclusive classrooms in which they can engage with rigorous, culturally relevant academic content. Researchers have found that educators of color are exceptionally adept at cultivating such learning environments, promoting stronger social and academic outcomes for students, especially youth of color.

But, today, our schools are not set up to support the success of teachers and leaders of color. Educators of color report that unclear pathways, unwritten rules, and unspoken expectations profoundly shape—and often hinder—their leadership journeys. What’s more, school system leaders—including those personally committed to racial equity—simply don’t know how to diversify their leadership corps and pipeline.

As a result, we do not have enough people of color entering careers in education. Even fewer are advancing into the upper echelons of leadership. And too many teachers and leaders of color leave the profession each year, burnt out from unrealistic demands, inadequate support, and routine discrimination. The status quo is unacceptable, and it does a real disservice to our students and our school communities, which are more racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse than ever.

It doesn’t have to be this way. To close opportunity and achievement gaps and accelerate learning, it is critical that we equip educators of color with tools, professional development, and support specific to their experiences navigating our schools as people of color. And it is imperative that education officials and organizational leaders listen to their staff members of color, and take concrete steps to cultivate more welcoming and inclusive spaces where educators of color can grow and flourish in their careers.

MCEL (Men of Color in Educational Leadership) is a national non-profit and network of educational leaders from across the educational leadership spectrum who are hyper-focused on eliminating achievement and opportunity gaps for all students. Based on research and lived experiences, MCEL supports male leaders of color who are uniquely positioned to disrupt current education ecosystems, lead through the lens of equity, and serve as critical levers to student success. Learn more at www.mcellleaders.org and access the entire Resilient, Representative Leadership Toolkit at www.mcellleaders.org/RRLToolkit.

OUR SOLUTION

A Leadership Framework and Guidebook for Educators of Color (with Tools for Our Equity-Minded Allies)

In 2022, MCEL spent 9+ months talking with 300+ educators of color serving in leadership positions across the country to more deeply understand how they survive and thrive in their careers.

In partnership with the Center for Creative Leadership, we reviewed and coded the details of these sweeping conversations. Our analyses revealed a notably consistent set of responses regarding the practices and approaches leaders of color rely on to successfully navigate tricky situations, capitalize on emerging opportunities, and ultimately accelerate student, school, and community success. These responses elevated the distinct importance of social and emotional intelligence, intrapersonal self-reflection, and exceptional interpersonal communication and collaboration for educators of color.

Our Resilient, Representative Leadership Framework consolidates these responses into 10 Essential Competencies for Educational Leaders of Color: the knowledge, skills, mindsets, dispositions, and behaviors most critical to the success of our diverse network of leaders.



DOMAIN 1 Projects and Maintains Steady, Confident Leadership

Resilient, Representative Leadership™ Framework

featuring the 10 Essential Competencies for Educational Leaders of Color ©

ESSENTIAL COMPETENCY 1

Strategic Disarming: Understands who is in the room, and takes proactive steps to mitigate potential issues by displaying warmth, openness, and a sense of humor.

ESSENTIAL COMPETENCY 2

Executive Stance: Communicates confidence and steadiness during difficult times, and adapts readily to new situations.

ESSENTIAL COMPETENCY 3

Equanimity: Demonstrates self-control in difficult situations.

ESSENTIAL COMPETENCY 4

Handles Disequilibrium: Can put stressful experiences into perspective and handles mistakes, stress, and ambiguity with poise.

ESSENTIAL COMPETENCY 5

Acts Systematically: Recognizes the political nature of the organization and works appropriately within it, including by establishing collaborative relationships and alliances.

ESSENTIAL COMPETENCY 6

Interpersonal Savvy: Is aware of own impact on situations and people, and accurately senses when to give and take during negotiations.

ESSENTIAL COMPETENCY 7

Recognizes Trade-Offs: Understands that every decision has conflicting interests and constituencies, and balances short-term pay-offs with long-term improvement.

DOMAIN 2 Effectively Navigates Organizational Dynamics and Relationships

DOMAIN 3
Knows
Oneself and
Lives Core
Values

ESSENTIAL COMPETENCY 8

Acknowledges Mirror Moments: Has an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses and is willing to improve.

ESSENTIAL COMPETENCY 9

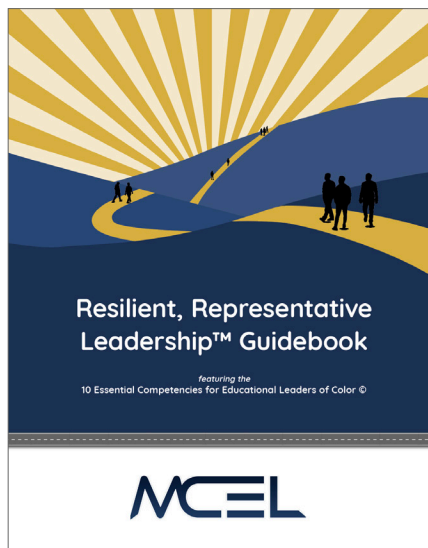
Credibility: Acts in accordance with stated values, follows through on promises, and uses ethical considerations to guide decisions and actions.

ESSENTIAL COMPETENCY 10

Work/Life Harmony: Balances work priorities with personal life.

The uncomfortable truth is that educators of color don't get opportunities to demonstrate their instructional leadership prowess if they aren't also adept in this core set of skills. If they don't expertly handle that unexpected moment of disequilibrium, they may not get another chance. If they haven't mastered that special blend of equanimity and executive stance, they might get permanently labeled "angry," "bossy," "hostile," or worse. As one MCEL network member shared with us, "Because our race is always in play, [the competencies] are absolutely essential to our survival."

We believe that prioritizing the personal and professional development of leaders of color is among the most powerful investments we can make in our students, schools, and society at large.



Our **Resilient, Representative Leadership Guidebook**

consolidates the advice we share with our friends and colleagues of color who are planning their pathways into educational leadership, rerouting around a career roadblock, or navigating a difficult or unexpected development in their leadership journeys.

Inspired by the Green Books and the Jewish Travel Guides published in early 20th-century America, the Guidebook is part affirmation and part roadmap for the leadership journey: it includes mirrors that reflect the shared experiences and strengths of leaders of color, and it offers concrete strategies that can help open doors for more educators of color to successfully step into and stay in leadership roles.

Emboldening resilient leaders of color without corollary systems change is just another recipe for burnout. The Resilient, Representative Leadership suite of resources is where we want our white allies to turn, too, when they need advice and support to be part of the big, bold systemic solutions we so desperately need.

Creating more equitable, joyful leadership journeys for educators of color takes all of us, working together.

ACTION PLANS

Bold Leaders Can Fuel Systemic Transformation

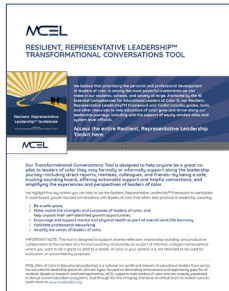
Our vision is that the Resilient, Representative Leadership Toolkit can, first and foremost, support educators of color on their leadership journeys.



Using our **Self-Reflection Tool**, leaders of color can grow intentionally, problem-solve, and regularly re-energize their leadership by:

- ✓ Reflecting on your overall resiliency as a leader.
- ✓ Building the habit of purposeful self-reflection.
- ✓ Prioritizing balance and modeling self-care, especially for educators of color in your sphere.
- ✓ Investing in your leadership team to help share the load (and support their advancement).
- ✓ Nurturing the relationships that sustain you.

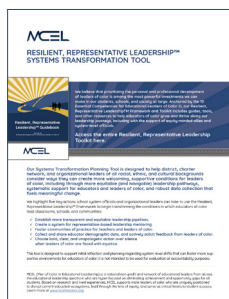
The Resilient, Representative Leadership Toolkit also supports anyone to participate in asset-based, growth-focused conversations with leaders of color that reflect best practices in leadership coaching.



Using our **Transformational Conversations Tool**, equity-minded allies can be great co-pilots to the educators of color in their lives by:

- ✓ Being a safe space.
- ✓ Making visible the strengths and successes of leaders of color, and helping to unpack their self-identified growth opportunities.
- ✓ Encouraging and supporting mental and physical health as part of overall work/life harmony.
- ✓ Facilitating professional networking.
- ✓ Amplifying the voices of leaders of color.

Finally, the Resilient, Representative Leadership Toolkit can help school, system-level, and organizational leaders to cultivate enterprise-wide cultures in which the perspectives, experiences, and needs of leaders of color are systematically woven into the fabric of their operations.



Using our **Systems Transformation Tool**, officials can break down barriers and create greater opportunities for educators of color at all stages of their careers by:

- ✓ Establishing more transparent and equitable leadership pipelines.
- ✓ Creating a system for representation-based leadership mentoring.
- ✓ Fostering communities of practice for teachers and leaders of color.
- ✓ Collecting and sharing educator demographic data, and actively soliciting feedback from leaders of color.
- ✓ Choosing bold, clear, and unapologetic action over silence when leaders of color are faced with injustice.

No matter your role, no matter your background, we're glad you're here. Together, we can make leadership a more accessible, welcoming, and sustainable experience for educators of color—and, in so doing, foster a more just and equitable future for all of our children and communities.