

**“More than just
teachers:”
Building stronger
student-teacher
relationships to
improve youth
opportunities and
well-being**

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Conference on Child Well-
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Mediation
June 26, 2019*



The Problem





1

- What are STRs?



2

- Why do they matter and for whom?



3

- How can we improve STRs?



4

- Can it really be done?

A young Black woman is shown from the chest up, looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression. She is holding a bouquet of orange and yellow flowers. The background features a large, stylized sun with a green and orange gradient, set against a light blue sky. The overall image has a soft, ethereal quality.

**STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS:
WHAT ARE THEY AND WHY DO THEY
MATTER?**

Individual?



Institutional



Terms

- Student-teacher relationships
- Climate
- Trust
- Being known v. alienation
- Caring and politicized caring

Why STRs matter...

Strong association between STRs and academic achievement

Positive STRs can mediate impact of SES on achievement

Positive STRs are especially important for students at risk



Why STRs matter...

Positive STRs are associated with less exclusionary discipline

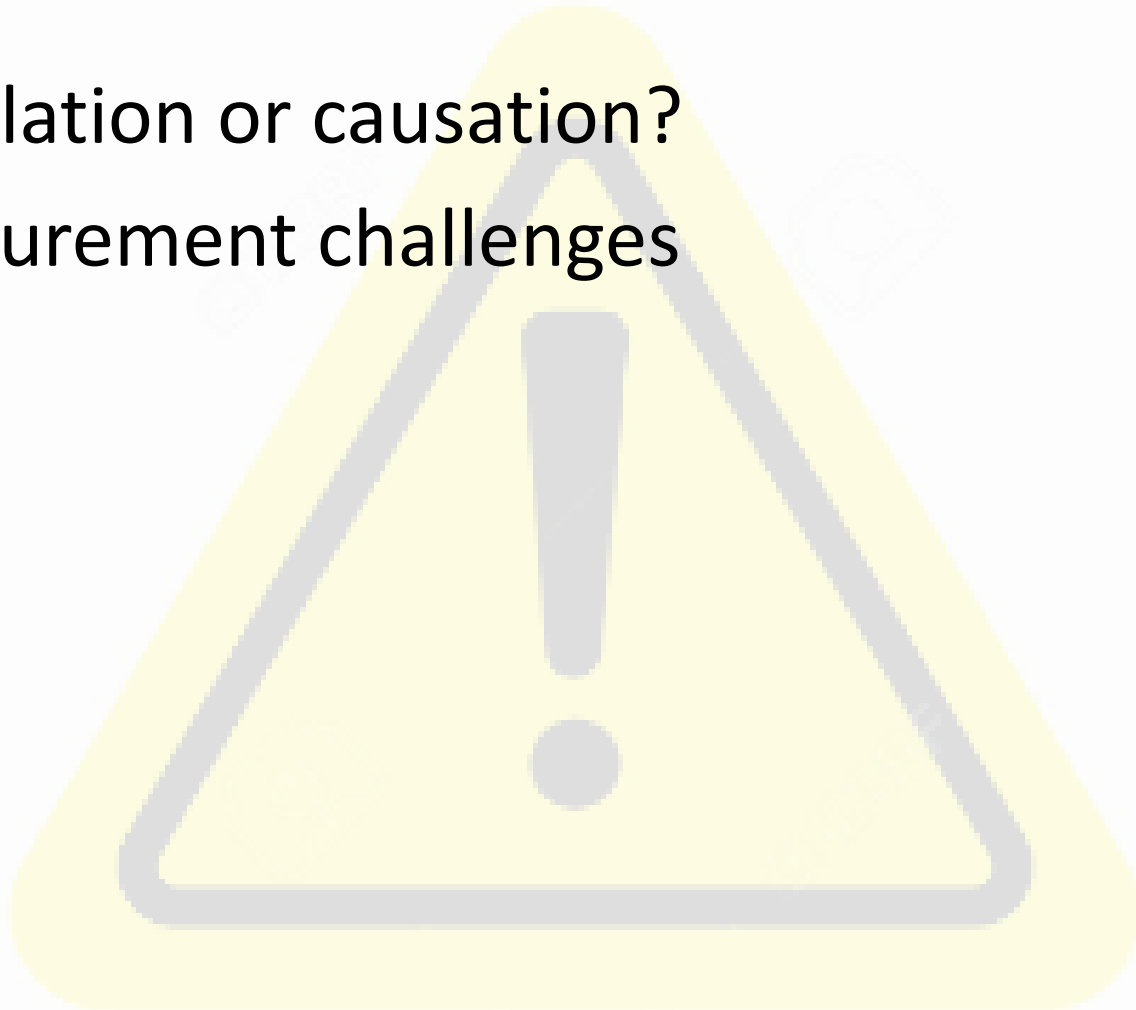
Also associated with higher attachment to schooling and self-esteem

STRs affect how students respond to bullying

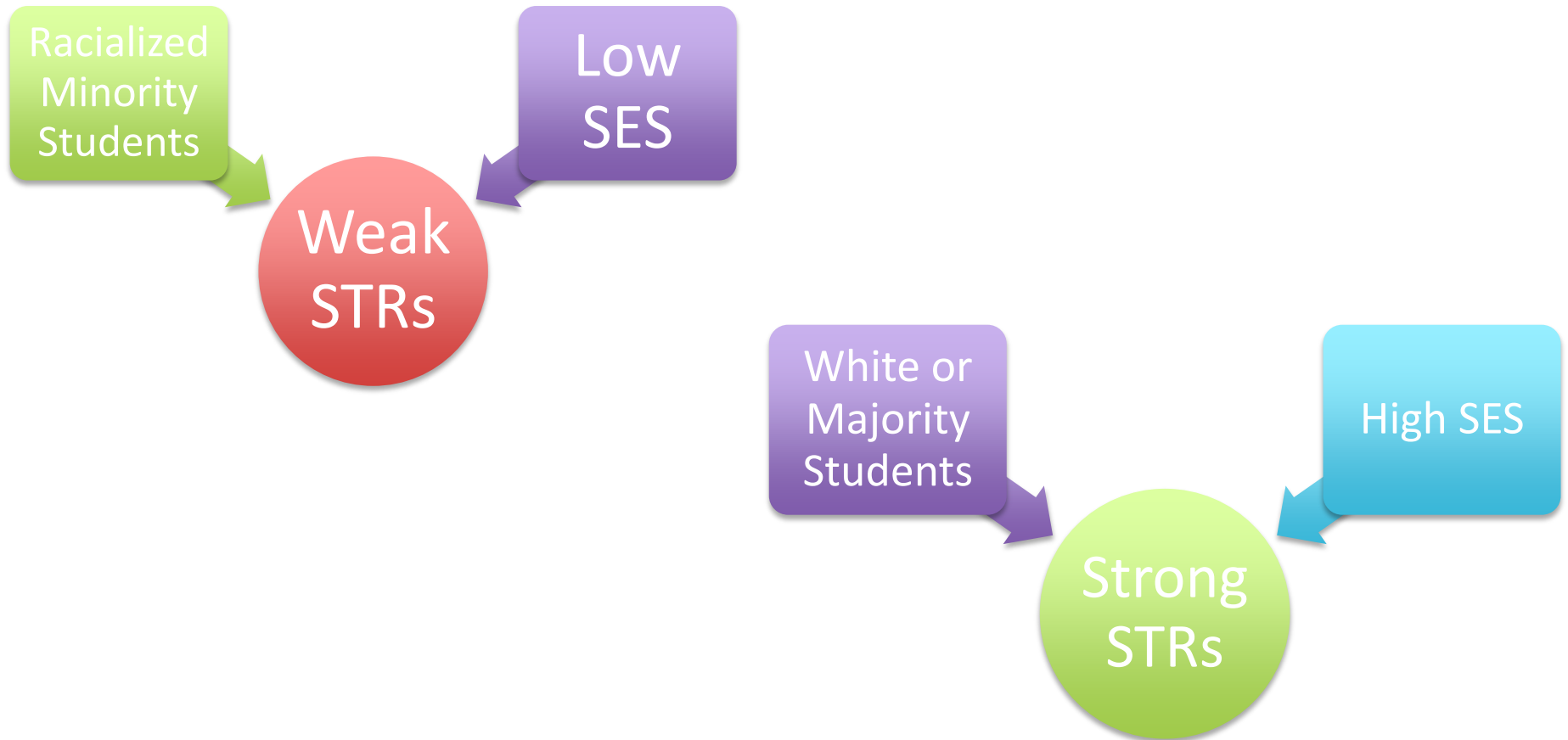


Proceed carefully....

- Correlation or causation?
- Measurement challenges



Average Group Variations





**HOW CAN SCHOOLS IMPROVE
STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS?**



Teachers

“Noticing”

Engaging beyond academics

Role breadth

TEACHERS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

A group of diverse teachers, including men and women of various ethnicities, are smiling and interacting in a classroom setting. The background shows educational posters and a whiteboard.

Pitfalls

- Stereotypes about cultural practices
- Deficit assumptions
- Patronizing students
- Ignoring/devaluing strengths and supports in families and communities
- Striving for “color blindness”
- Moving too quickly

Promising Practices

- Developing cultural competence
- Collective understandings of classroom and school
- Politicized caring
- Earning trust carefully and intentionally



School Climate

School leader is key

“Role breadth”

Holistic view of students



Organizational Characteristics: Hard or Problematic to Change

Private, religious, small schools tend to have better STRs

Diversity makes developing strong STRs challenging

Racial mismatch between students and teachers also interferes with strong STRs



Organizational Structures: More Amenable to Change

“Looping”

Small learning communities

Reduced student-teacher ratios

Extra curricular activities

Advisories

The “Grammar” of Schooling





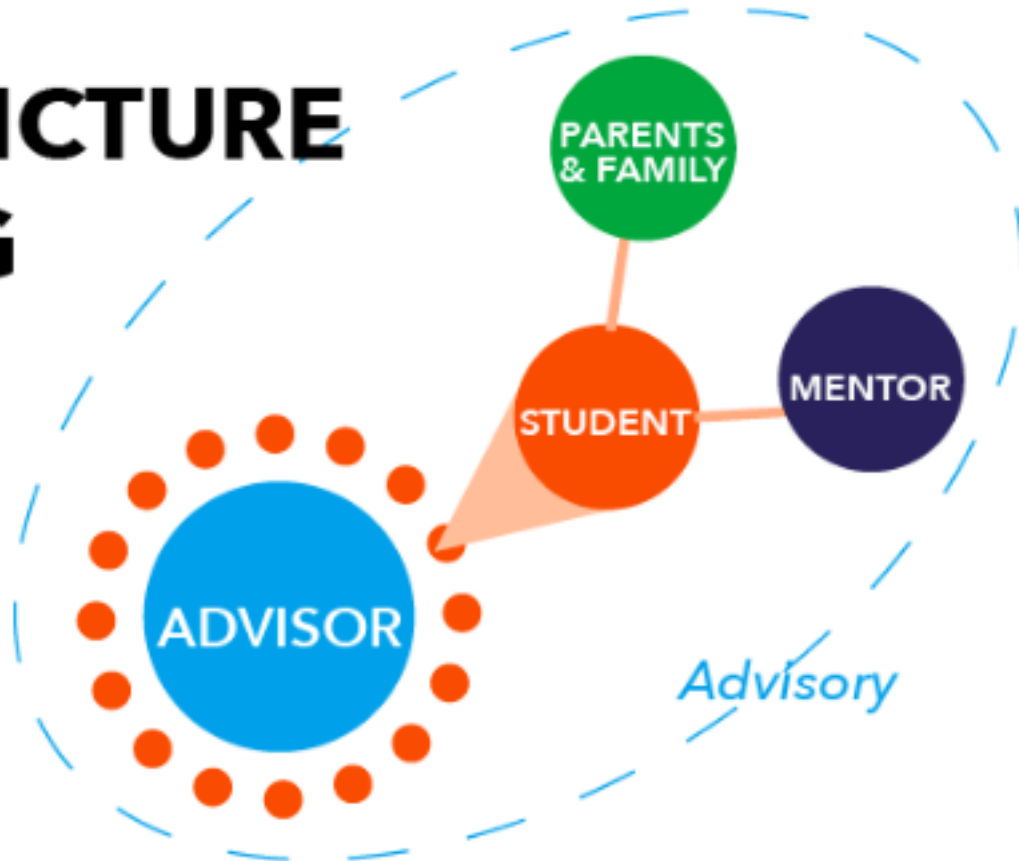
PUTTING RELATIONSHIPS FIRST: A PROMISING MODEL

BIG PICTURE LEARNING



ONE STUDENT AT A TIME

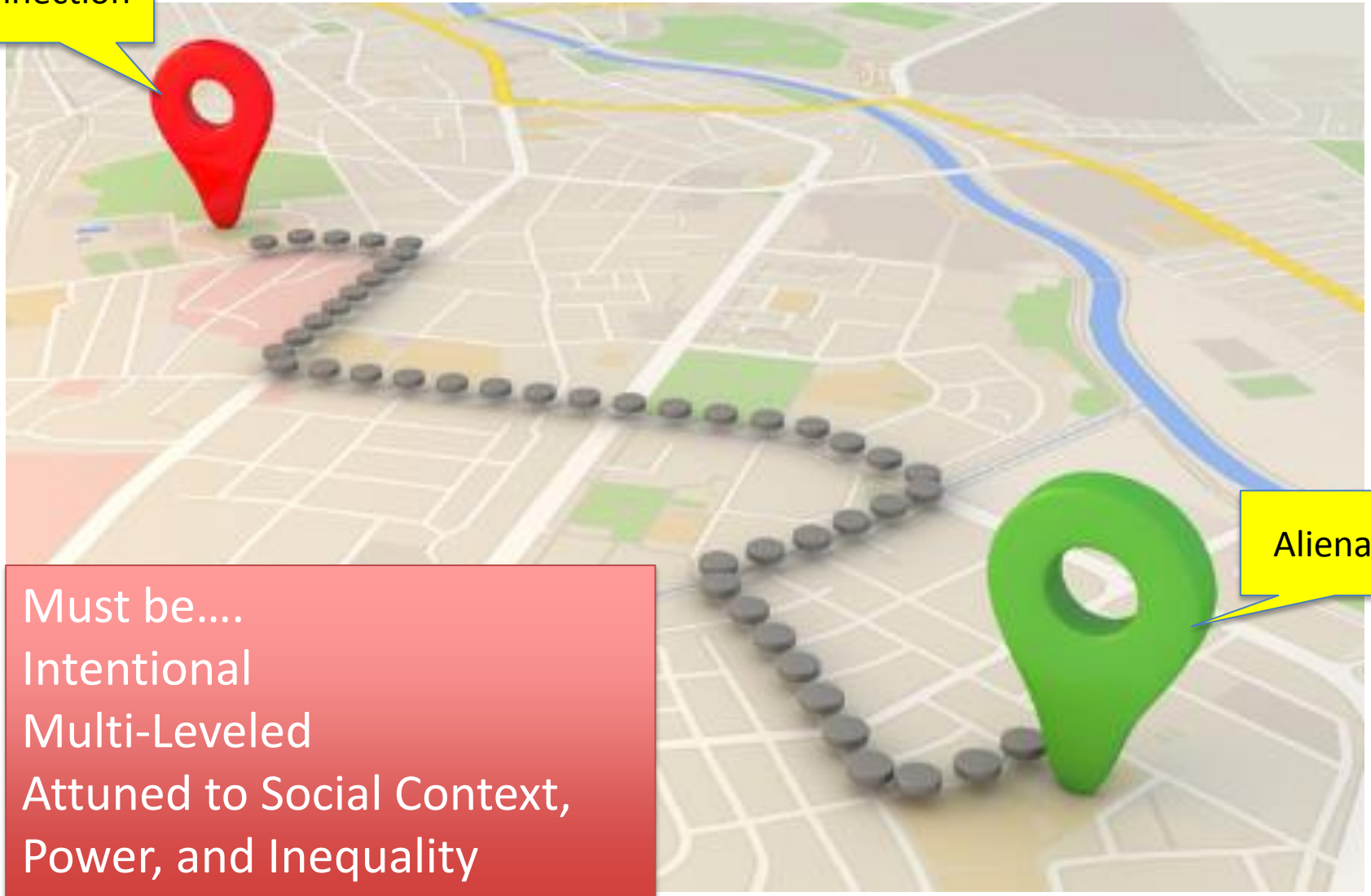
THE BIG PICTURE LEARNING DESIGN





[A Student's Perspective](#)

Connection



Alienation

Must be....
Intentional
Multi-Leveled
Attuned to Social Context,
Power, and Inequality