

# The Education Debt: Improving Student Outcomes in the Midst of Pandemics

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# Who Am I?

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Professor Emerita, UW-  
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President National Academy of  
Education

Fellow, American Academy of  
Arts & Sciences

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Research Association

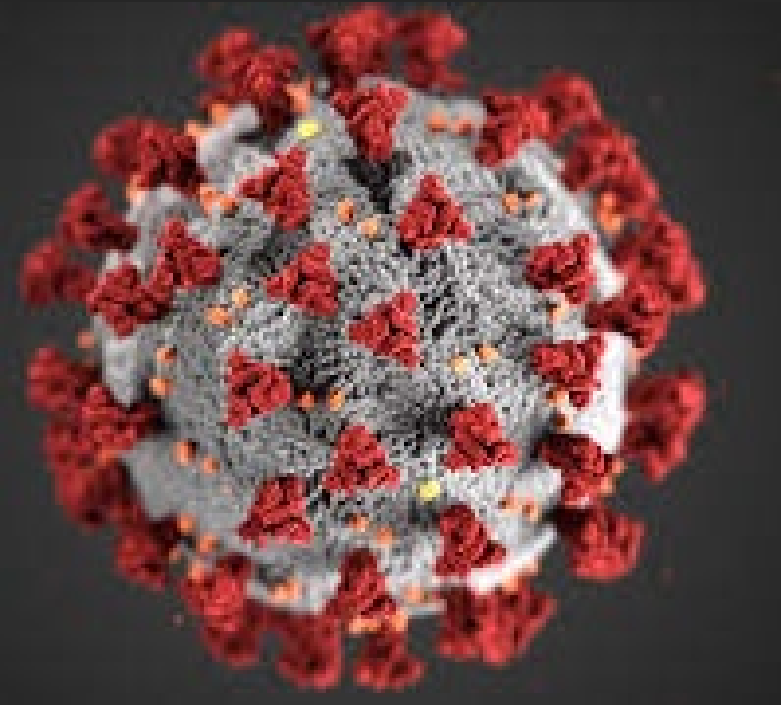
Fellow, Hagler Institute, Texas  
A&M University





# A Tale of 4 Pandemics

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
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Arundhati Roy



# The Nature of Pandemics

*Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it. ~ Arundhati Roy*

**Features** 

 **2006 Presidential Address**

**From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt:  
Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools**  
by Gloria Ladson-Billings

The achievement gap is one of the most talked about issues in U.S. education. The term refers to the disparity in educational test scores between Black and White, Latino and White, and recent immigrant and White students. The white paper argues that schools on the gap is complex. Instead, we need to look at the "education debt" that has accumulated over time. The debt comprises historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral components. The author draws an analogy with the concept of national debt—which she contrasts with that of a national budget deficit—to argue for a purpose of the education debt.

... have spent a better part of this year reading the presidential addresses of a number of former AERA presidents. More so, the idea of giving addresses about something they know well—this year research. Of course, I was not fully persuaded by their messages. Instead, I accepted an honor something new, and, unfortunately, the studies will have no discernible whether I read it and enough to make it with my professional colleagues.

The questions that plague me about education research are not new. I am concerned about the meaning of our work for the large public—the students, teachers, administrators, parents, policy makers, and communities and scholars alike. Have these are our true concerns, they have been used by others, people like the late Kenneth B. Clark, who, in the 1960s, was one of the few social scientists to bring research to the public in a meaningful way. He, with his wife and colleague Mamie, founded the Center for the Black Child in *Black Children* (1974) and that was a high regard to public schools and urban public communities. However, in his classic volume *Dark Children: Education of Social Theory*, first published in 1967, Clark with social scientists made his case for us to fully engage and understand the plight of the poor.

... To our knowledge, there is a pressing need to do the work of social scientists to describe and address the needs of and address the needs of graduate students in social science to prepare them for the reality and complexity of their job of social science work.

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AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

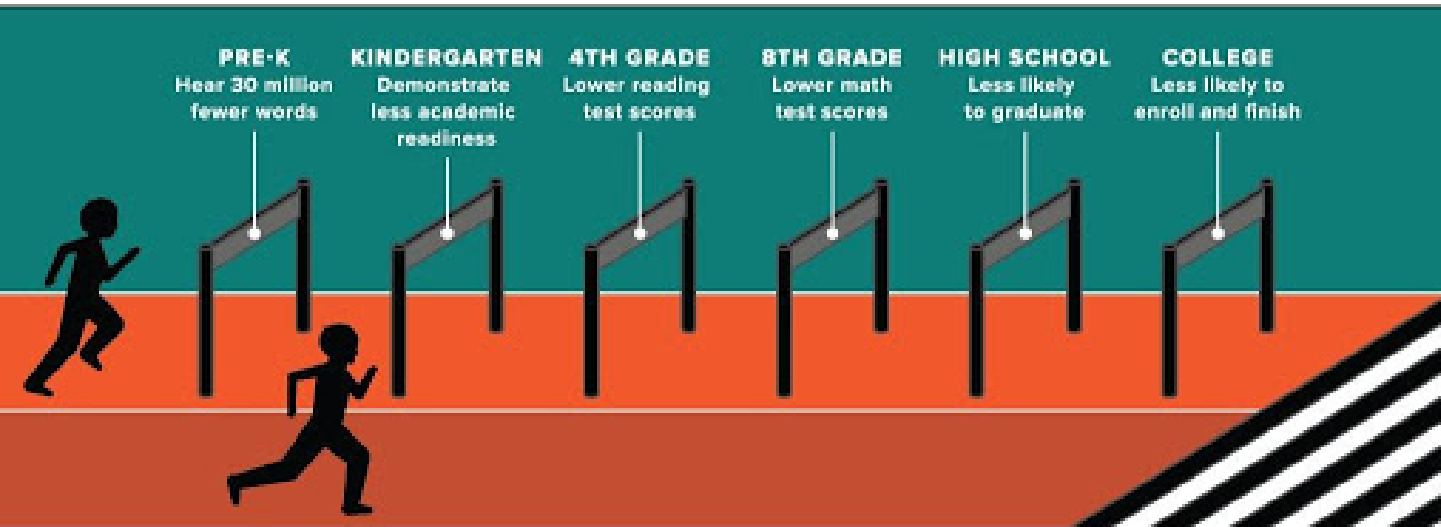
# The Education Debt - 2006



# National Debt

# Achievement Gaps Start Early and Persist

Children of color or low-income status are more likely to lag behind



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## From Achievement Gap to Education Debt

Achievement Gap – Places the onus on students, parents, culture and sometimes individual teachers

- Presumes the crux of the problem is school achievement
- Ignores “other gaps” – health, wealth, teacher quality...



# Deficit vs Debt

Deficit – The difference between the flow of government spending and the flow of government revenues

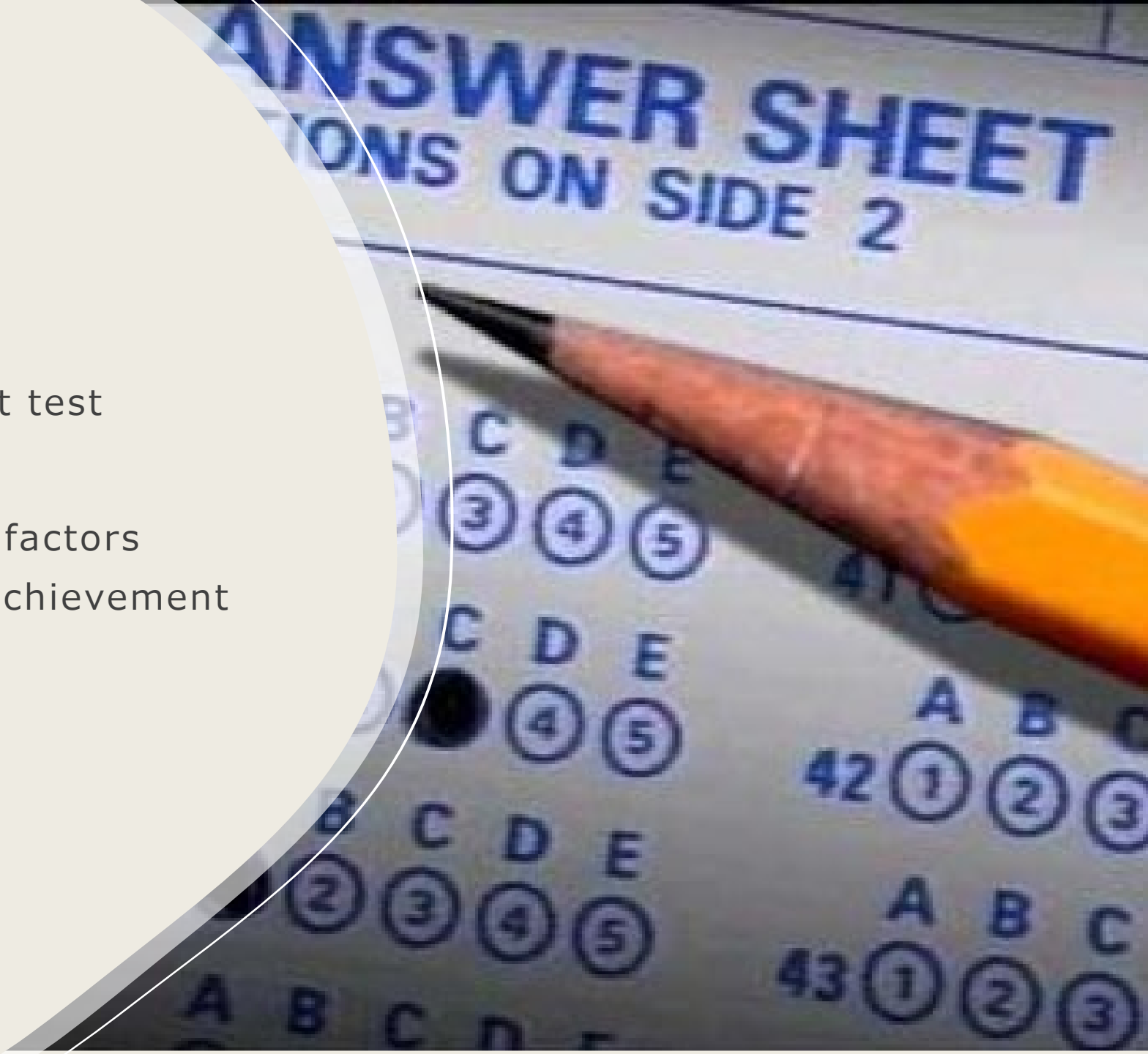
Debt - The debt is the total the U.S. government owes—the sums it borrowed to cover last year's deficit and all the deficits in years past



# The Academic Analogy

Deficit – Yearly achievement test scores

Debt – Accumulation of the factors contributing to the lack of achievement progress





# The Debt is Historical

Blacks not permitted to read and write

Separate and substandard schools

Housing policy that denies access to quality schools

Under prepared and unqualified teachers

# The Debt is Economic

SCHOOL DISTRICTS WHERE the majority of students enrolled are students of color receive \$23 billion less in education funding than predominantly white school districts, despite serving the same number of students – a dramatic discrepancy that underscores the depth of K-12 funding inequities in the U.S.





# The Debt is Sociopolitical

15<sup>th</sup> Amendment granted franchise to all male citizens

19<sup>th</sup> Amendment granted franchise to women

Neither guaranteed Blacks the right to vote

Not until Voting Rights Act of 1965 were Blacks assured voting rights

This means not until 20<sup>th</sup> century could Black even select local officials like school board members.

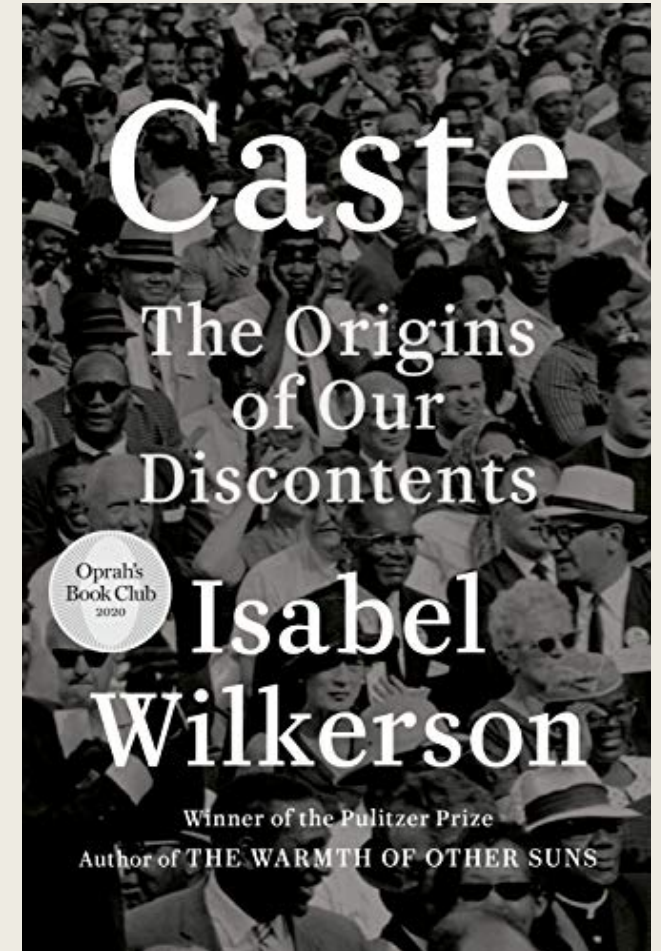
# The Debt is Moral

Denial of full citizenship is immoral

Redlining and discriminatory housing policy is immoral

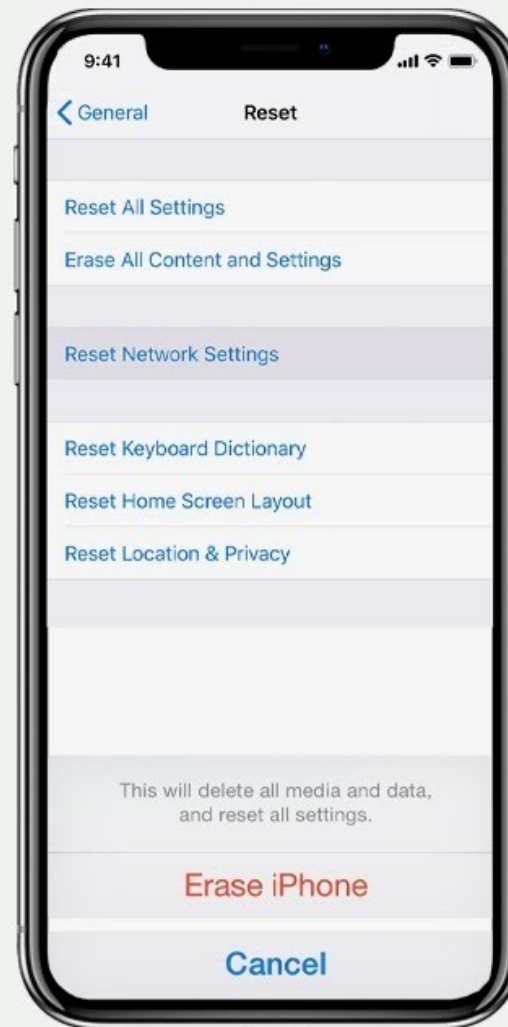
Inability to access quality health care is immoral

Differential treatment in the justice system is immoral





# How to **Reset** Your Device in 2020





Lessons from history





Remember  
Katrina ?

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# What Does This Mean in a Post- Pandemic World?

Remember what  
happened Post-  
Katrina?

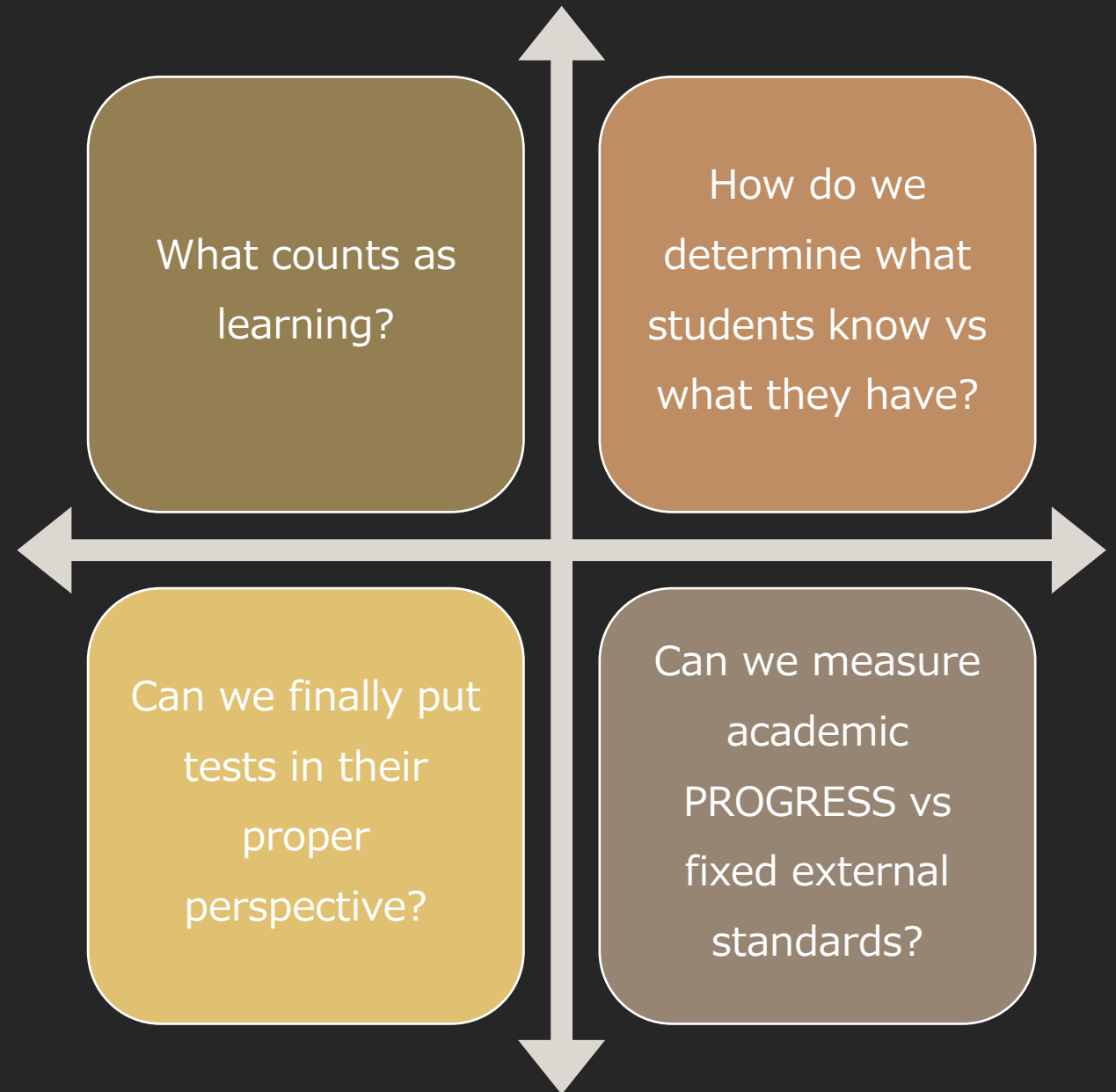
Changed  
assumptions? (e.g.  
who can have access  
to digital devices?,  
how important are the  
tests?)

Role of Social-  
Emotional Learning &  
Mental Health Needs

How to re-think  
education

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# Post Pandemic Student Learning



# Post Pandemic Cultural Competence

What is the role of youth culture?

What is the role of socio-economic differences?

How do we help teachers understand disparity?

What is the role of digital literacy?

# Post-Pandemic Critical Consciousness

What questions  
do we need to  
engage?

How do we help  
the public  
understand our  
changing needs?

For what SEL do  
we prepare?

How do we help  
students cope  
with pandemic  
trauma?