

Democracy-centered School Leadership



Georgia Center for Educational Renewal

Dr. Charles A. Reavis, Director

Dr. Barbara Mallory, Associate



The World Is Flat

Friedman, The World is Flat

- India has 2nd largest Muslim population
- Yet, no evidence of involvement in world-wide extremism
- Pakistan, just across the border has broad participation
- Why?

Suggests three reasons:

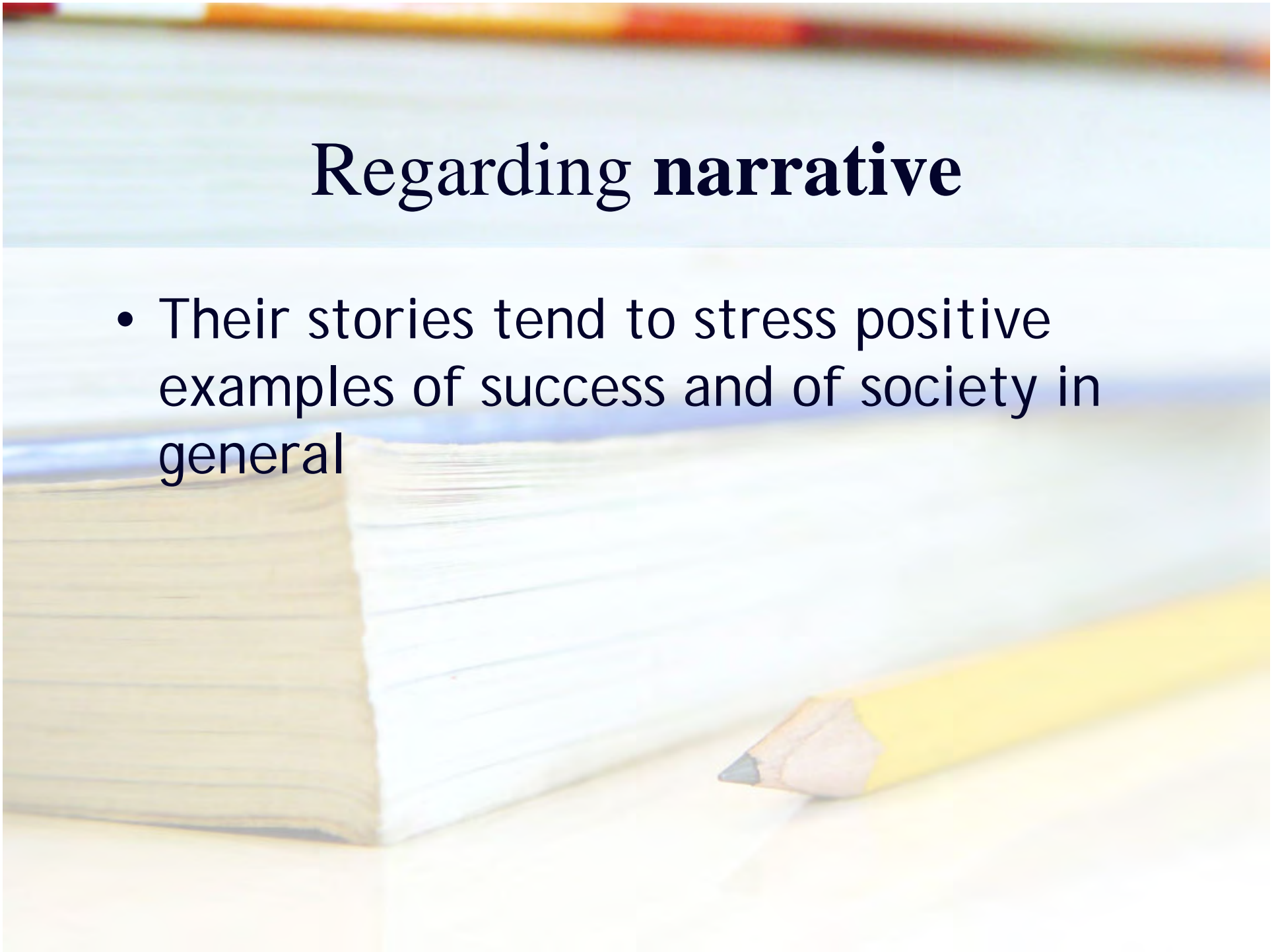
- Context - their environment,
- Narrative - the stories they tell
- Imagination - how they can get ahead, gain recognition

Regarding **context**

- Only in India do Muslims enjoy truly democratic government as contrasted with other predominately Muslim countries
- Only in India do they enjoy relatively solid protection of religious expression
- Only in India do they enjoy relatively open avenues for success

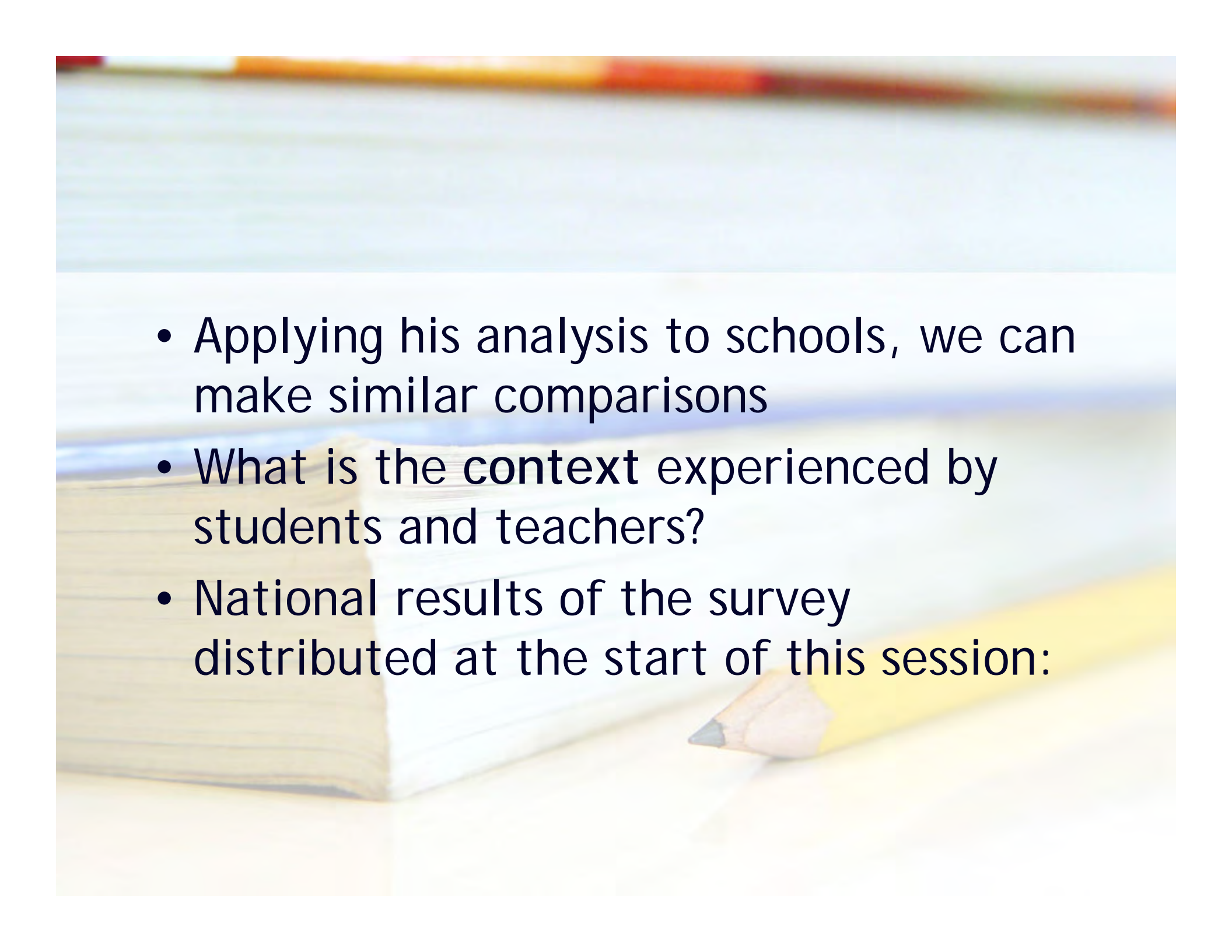
Regarding **narrative**

- Their stories tend to stress positive examples of success and of society in general



Regarding **imagination**

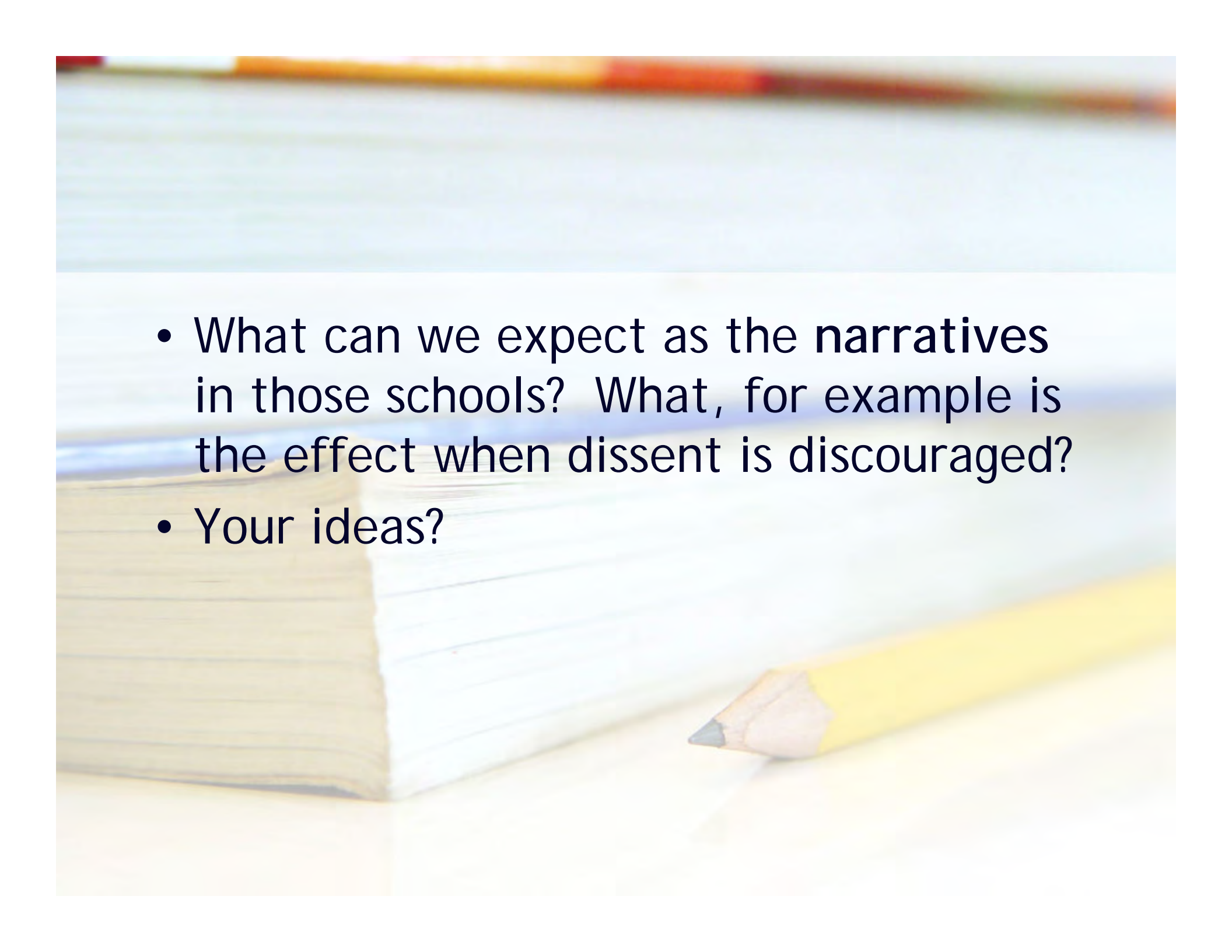
- Considering the context they live in and the narratives that arise out of that context, they can imagine themselves as successful, enjoying life, and contributing positively to that context

- 
- The background of the slide features a stack of books with white pages and a yellow pencil with a sharpened lead tip, resting on the top book. The scene is softly lit, creating a warm and academic atmosphere.
- Applying his analysis to schools, we can make similar comparisons
 - What is the **context** experienced by students and teachers?
 - National results of the survey distributed at the start of this session:


- 
- The background of the slide features a stack of books with various colored spines (red, orange, yellow, blue) and a yellow pencil lying horizontally across the bottom right. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.
- Civic responsibility - 67%, Agree
 - Freedom of expression - 0%
 - Freedom of religion - 50%
 - Freedom of the press - 0%
 - Broad-based participation - 0%
 - Civic mission to the public - 50%
 - Parent, etc. participation - 100%
 - Student government - 0%
 - Curriculum engages - 0%
 - Service learning - 0%

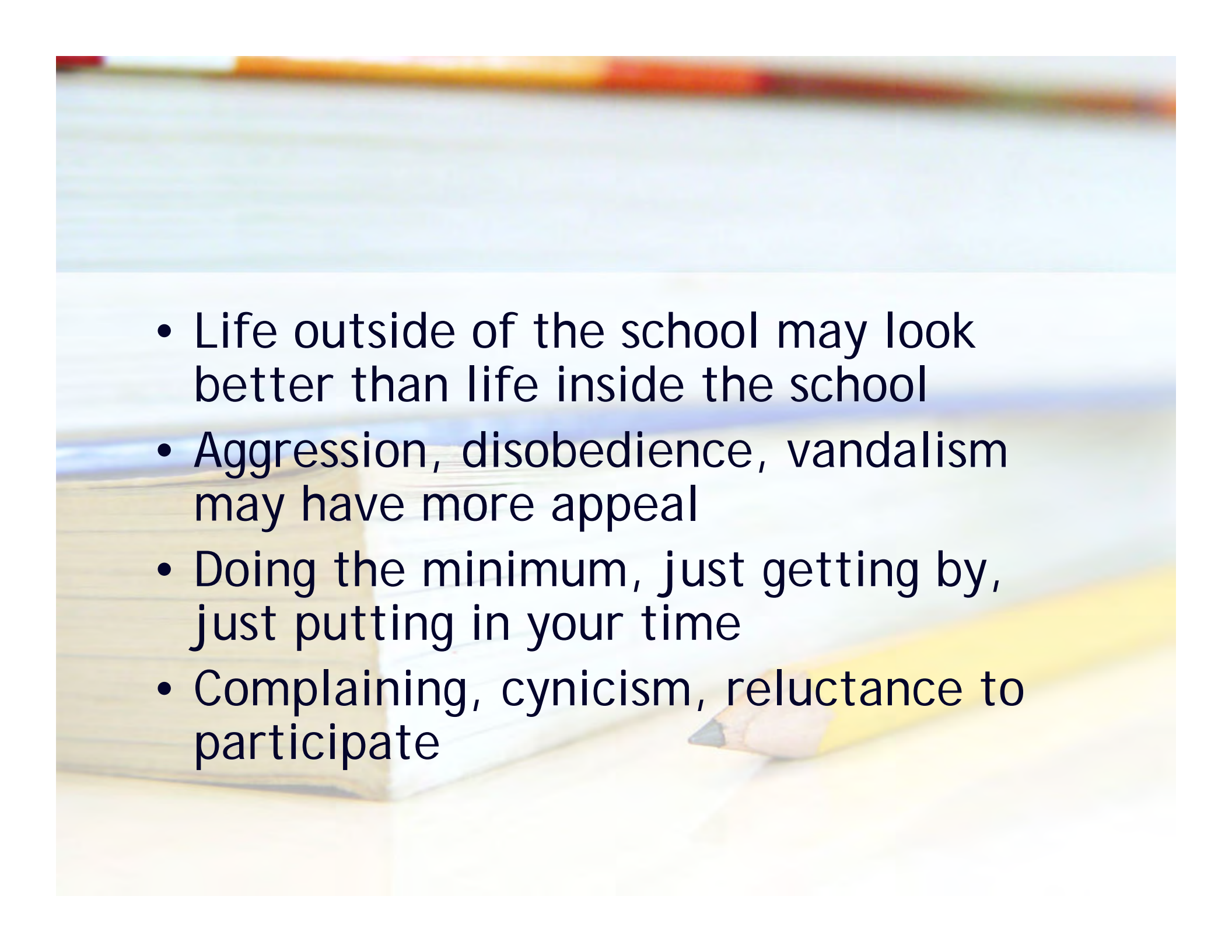
A review of these results suggests that

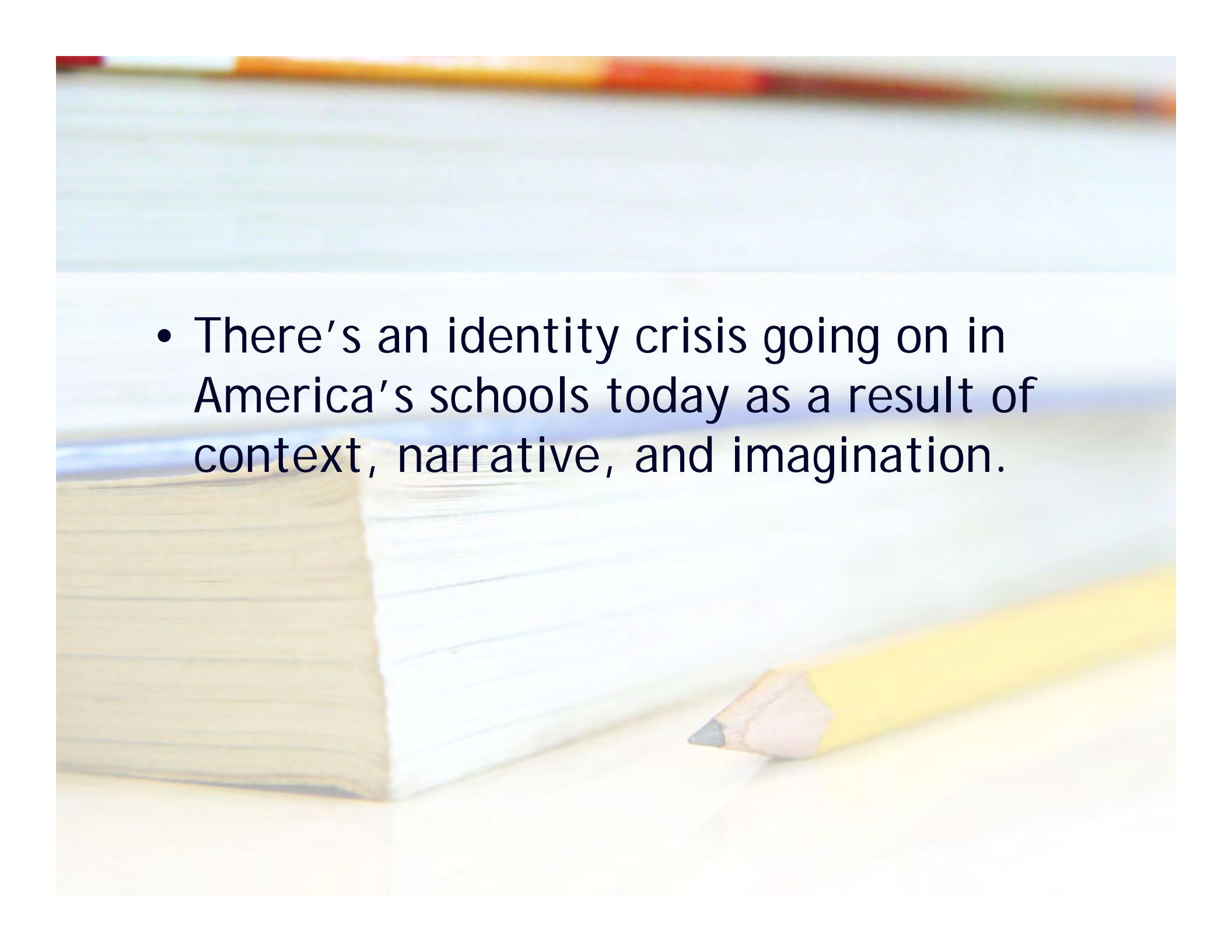
- Schools do not support dissent (items 2, 4, and 8)
- Schools do not support civic participation (items 5, 6)
- Curriculum does not support civic responsibility (items 9 and 10)
- This, then is the **context** experienced by at least some students and teachers in the responding schools

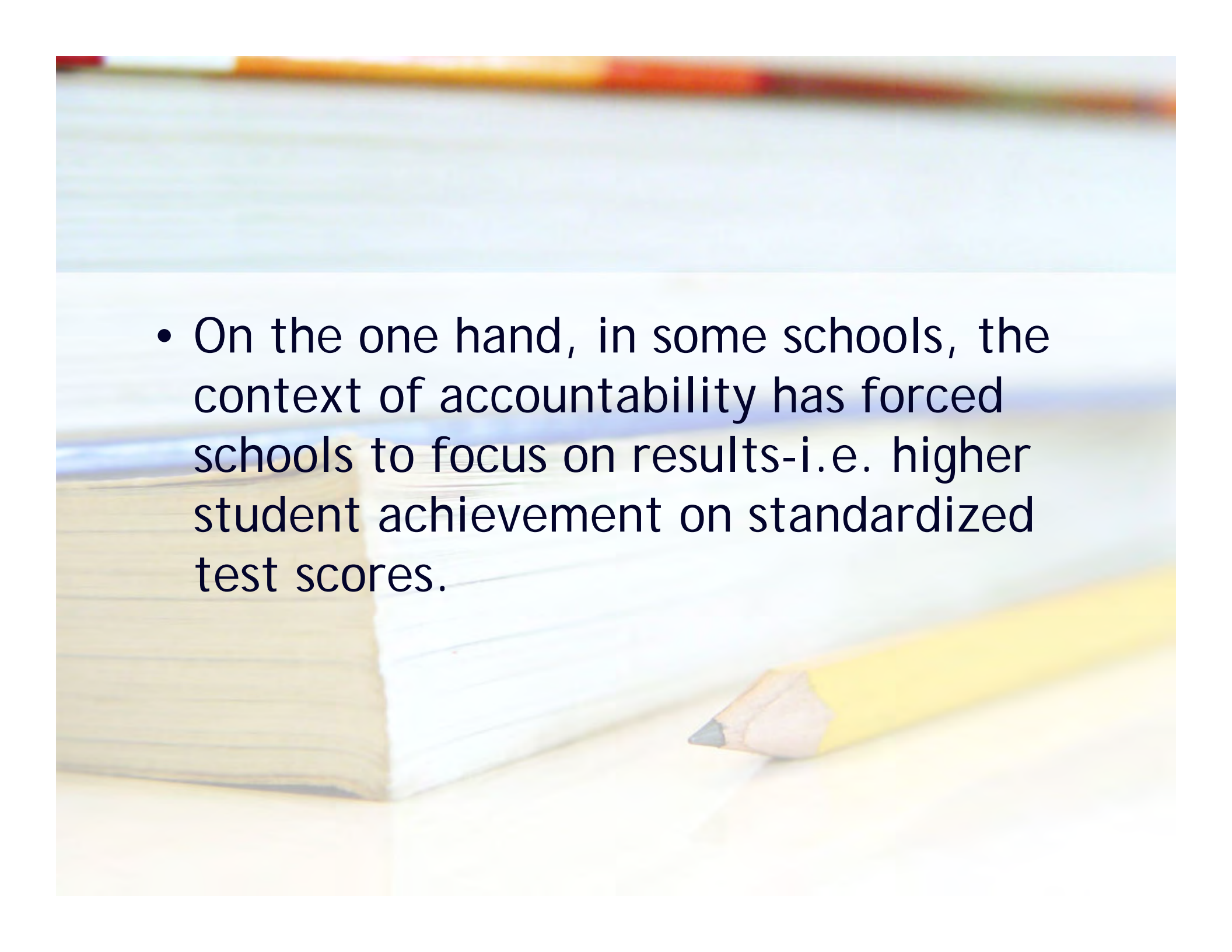
- 
- The background of the slide is a blurred photograph. On the left, there is a stack of several books with white pages and dark covers. To the right, a yellow pencil with a sharpened lead tip lies horizontally. The overall scene is brightly lit, creating a soft, out-of-focus effect.
- What can we expect as the **narratives** in those schools? What, for example is the effect when dissent is discouraged?
 - Your ideas?

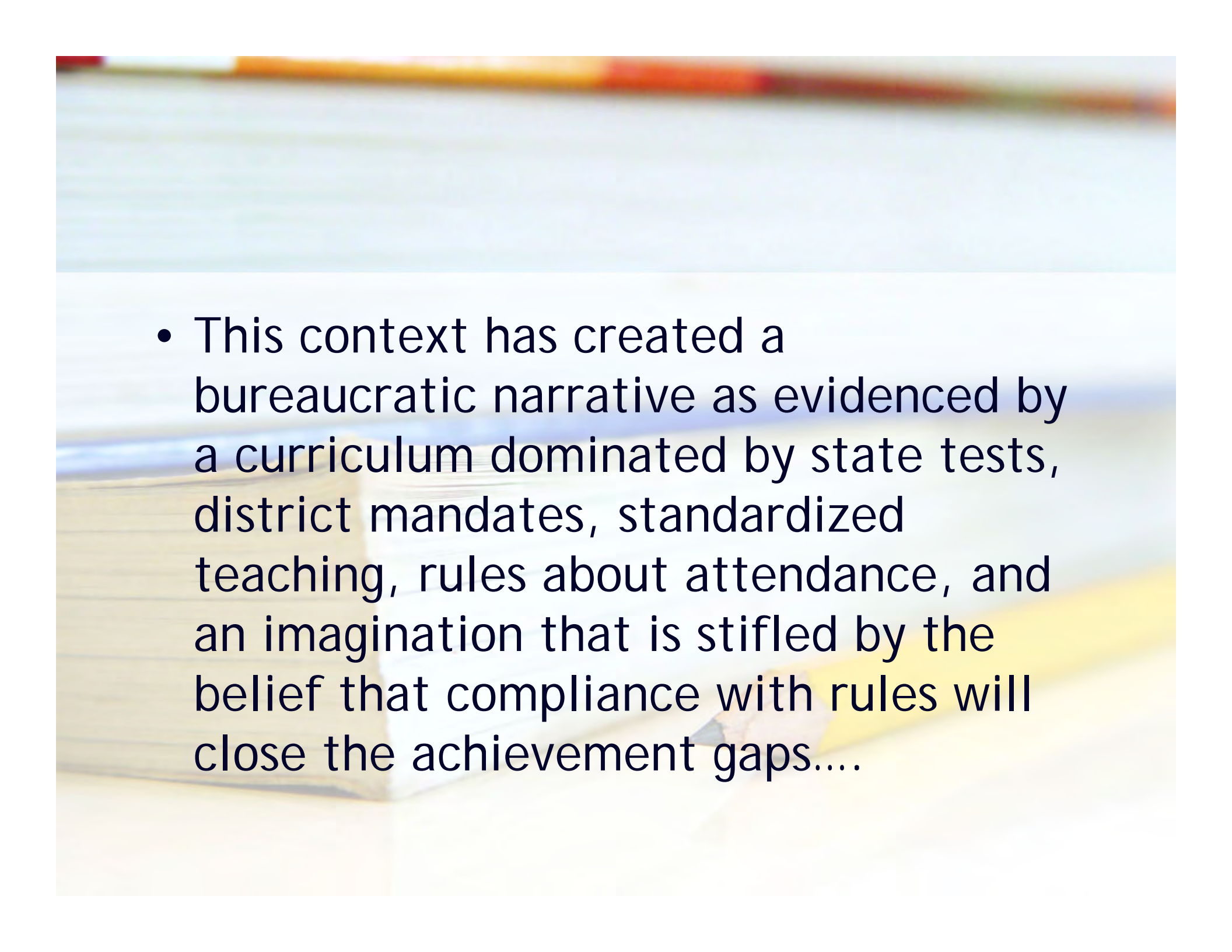
- “You can’t buck the system”
- “They think they are always right”
- “It’s no use to try; they won’t listen”
- “They ask for input, but they have their minds made up”
- “Only the good students can catch a break”
- “You only care about the rich, white people”
- “Just give me the pacing guide and tell me where my classroom is”
- “Just teach to the test and don’t make waves”
- “Test scores and teaching to the standards are all that is supported in this school”


- 
- A blurred background image of a yellow pencil lying on a stack of lined paper. The pencil is positioned horizontally across the middle of the frame, with its tip pointing towards the left. The paper is stacked, with the top sheet being white and the bottom sheet being a light beige color. The overall image is out of focus, creating a soft, dreamy atmosphere.
- And from these narratives, what imaginations might develop?
 - Your ideas?

- 
- The background of the slide is a soft-focus photograph. It shows a stack of several books with white pages and dark covers, resting on a light-colored surface. A yellow pencil with a sharpened lead tip lies diagonally across the bottom right of the frame. The overall lighting is bright and even, creating a clean, educational aesthetic.
- Life outside of the school may look better than life inside the school
 - Aggression, disobedience, vandalism may have more appeal
 - Doing the minimum, just getting by, just putting in your time
 - Complaining, cynicism, reluctance to participate

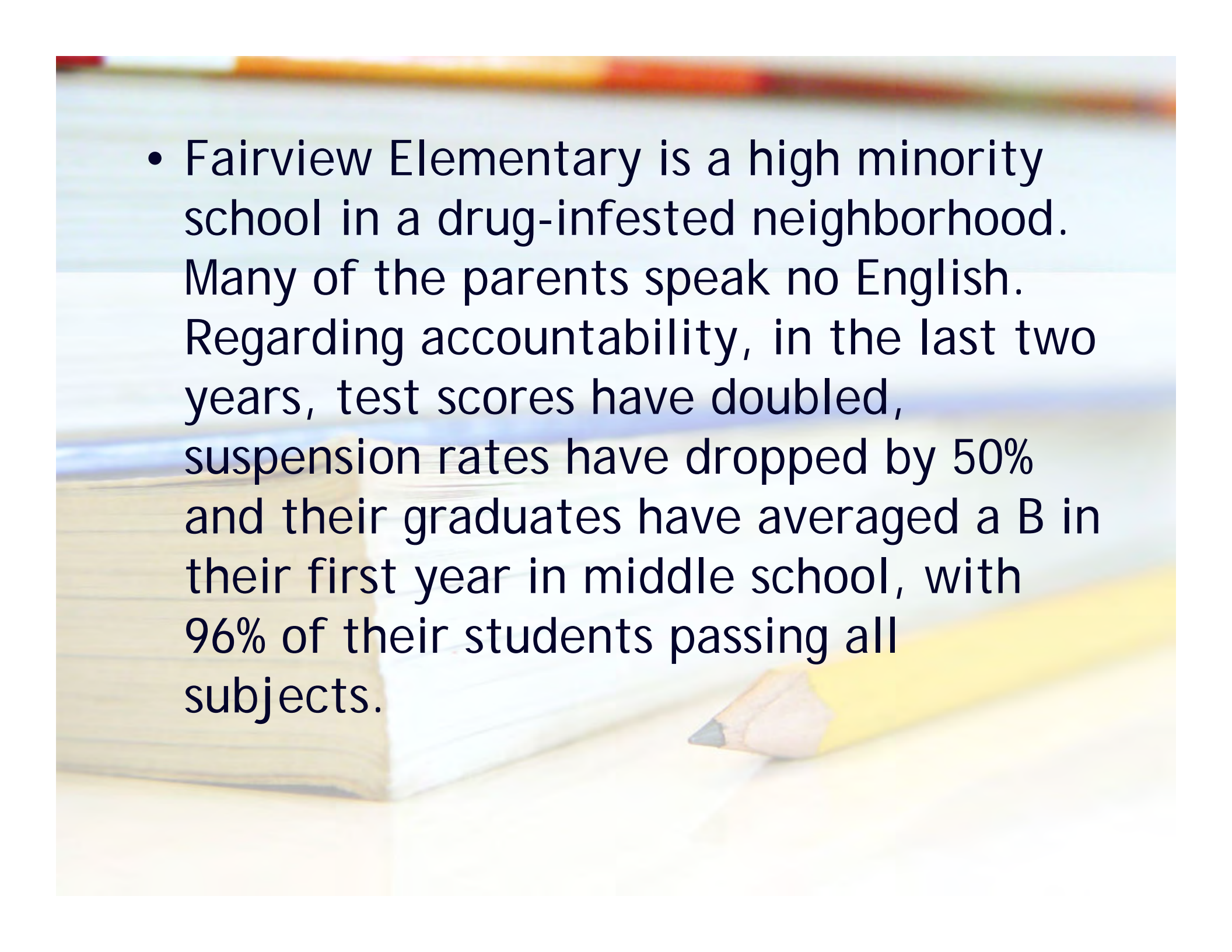
- 
- A yellow pencil with a sharpened lead tip lies diagonally across a stack of lined papers. The papers are slightly blurred, and the pencil is the central focus of the image. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue and white.
- There's an identity crisis going on in America's schools today as a result of context, narrative, and imagination.

- 
- The background of the slide features a soft-focus image of a yellow pencil with a sharpened lead tip, lying diagonally across an open book. The book's pages are visible, showing horizontal lines. The overall lighting is bright and even, creating a clean, educational aesthetic.
- On the one hand, in some schools, the context of accountability has forced schools to focus on results-i.e. higher student achievement on standardized test scores.

- 
- This context has created a bureaucratic narrative as evidenced by a curriculum dominated by state tests, district mandates, standardized teaching, rules about attendance, and an imagination that is stifled by the belief that compliance with rules will close the achievement gaps....

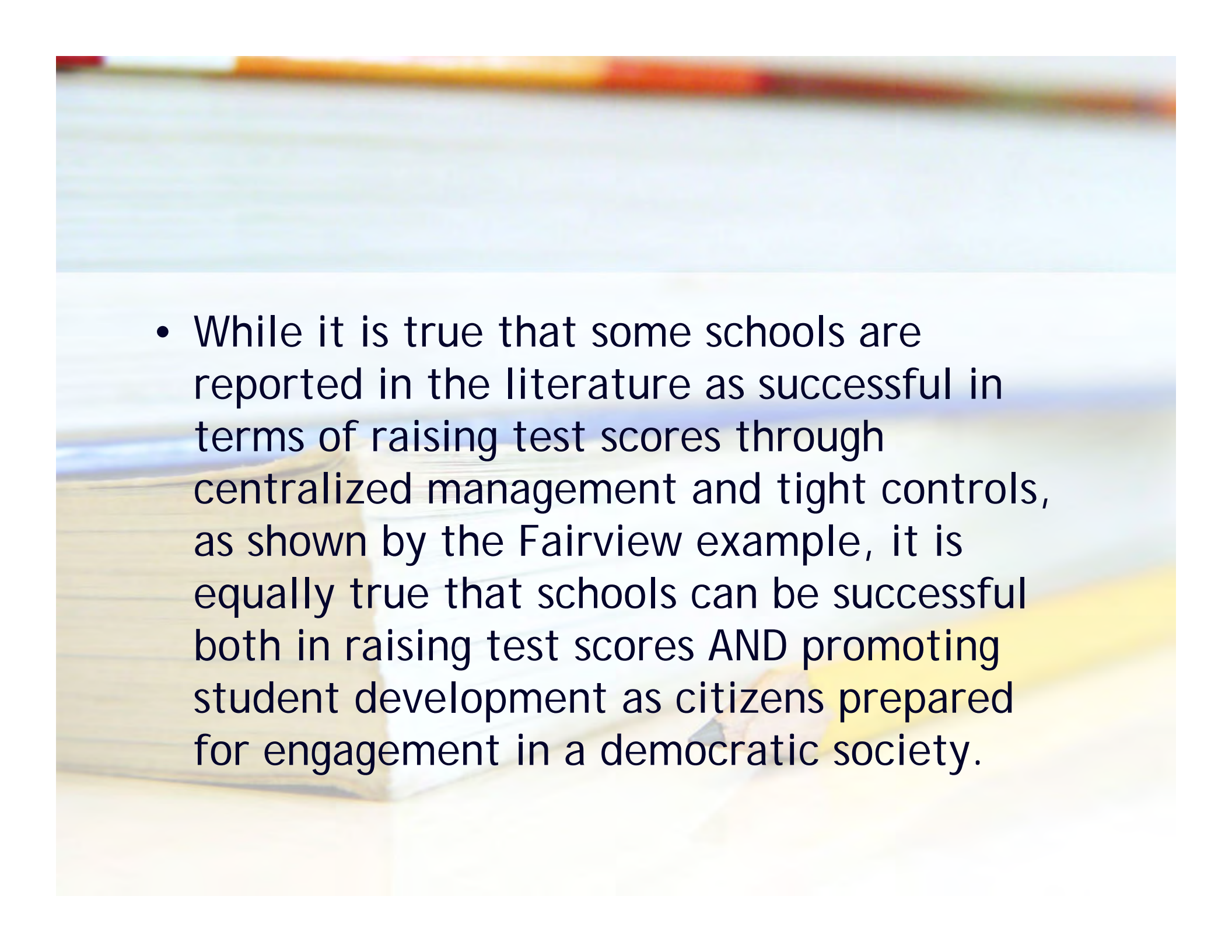
- 
- The background of the slide is a soft-focus photograph. It shows a stack of several books with various colored spines (red, orange, yellow, green) at the top. Below the books, a yellow pencil with a sharpened lead tip and a pink eraser is lying horizontally. The overall lighting is bright and even, creating a clean, educational aesthetic.
- On other hand, in some schools there's a context of autonomy and freedom which contributes to a democratic narrative which promotes continuous student progress and a sense of engagement. This democratic narrative supports an imagination that focuses on possibilities and fires the excitement of one's own ability and capacity to make a difference.


- 
- The background of the slide features a close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a yellow pencil lying on a white, lined notebook. The pencil is positioned diagonally from the bottom right towards the center. The notebook pages are visible, showing horizontal lines. The lighting is soft, creating a warm, educational atmosphere.
- Let's look at one school that has the context of both democracy and accountability. Fairview Elementary is one of 97 First Amendment Schools


- 
- The background of the slide features a stack of several books with white pages and dark covers, positioned on the left side. A yellow pencil with a sharpened lead tip and a pink eraser is lying horizontally across the bottom right portion of the image. The overall background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue and white gradient.
- Fairview Elementary is a high minority school in a drug-infested neighborhood. Many of the parents speak no English. Regarding accountability, in the last two years, test scores have doubled, suspension rates have dropped by 50% and their graduates have averaged a B in their first year in middle school, with 96% of their students passing all subjects.

Identity Resolved!

As an example of democracy in action, the students were able to reverse a student dress code. Accountability and democracy can be complimentary, not oppositional.

- 
- The background of the slide is a blurred image of an open book with a yellow highlighter resting on it. The text is overlaid on this background.
- While it is true that some schools are reported in the literature as successful in terms of raising test scores through centralized management and tight controls, as shown by the Fairview example, it is equally true that schools can be successful both in raising test scores AND promoting student development as citizens prepared for engagement in a democratic society.

- 
- The background of the slide features a close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a yellow pencil with a sharpened lead tip, resting on a white, lined notebook page. The pencil is positioned diagonally from the bottom right towards the center. The notebook's pages are visible, showing horizontal blue lines. The overall lighting is soft and natural, creating a clean, educational aesthetic.
- As we make the case for democracy-centered schools in an environment of high stakes testing and accountability, one might ask, “What are democracy-centered schools?”

- 
- The background of the slide features a stack of several books with various colored spines (red, orange, yellow, green, blue) on the left side. A yellow pencil with a sharpened lead tip and a pink eraser is positioned diagonally across the bottom right of the image, resting on a white surface. The overall scene is softly blurred, creating a clean, educational aesthetic.
- Once again, we'll engage you in an exercise to determine the status of your school as a democracy-centered school by describing 6 correlates of democracy-centered schools. Reflect on your school as you review these correlates, which are democracy-centered values.

The background of the slide features a close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a yellow pencil lying on a lined notebook. The pencil is positioned diagonally from the bottom right towards the center. The notebook pages are white with light blue horizontal lines. The lighting is soft, creating a warm, educational atmosphere. The text is overlaid on the central part of the image.

Correlates of Democracy- Centered Schools

Current Practices

Correlates

Democracy-centered Practices

Compliant students are valued. Conformity is desired. Good students are recognized and privileged within the school.

Grades are used to sort and select.

1-The individual is valued and respected.

All students are valued. Individual identity is valued, and individual student progress is monitored.

Continuous student progress is valued.

Assessment for learning is the focus.

Current Practices

Correlates

Democracy-centered Practices

Students witness unequal application of policies and procedures.

Classes are “dumbed down” for some students.

Homogeneity of representation.

2-Equality and equity are core values.

Students witness democratic values and practices in policy development and application.

Equity of instructional practices is demonstrated in all classrooms.

Heterogeneous representation.

Current Practices

Correlates

Democracy-centered Practices

Dissent is discouraged.

3. Civility and decency are practiced.

Dissent is expected and respected.

Current Practices

Correlates

Democracy-centered Practices

Those in power develop rules, procedures, and consequences.

There is an imbalance between the common good and individual rights.

The common good is enforced by authoritarian practices

4. Justice is practiced

Conflicting viewpoints are considered and provided a means to influence rules, procedures, and consequences.

Rules, procedures, and consequences are developed by all who will be affected by them.

The common good is balanced by individual rights

Current Practices

Correlates

Democracy-centered Practices

Freedom is restricted, even feared. Questioning and thinking are discouraged, especially in some classrooms.

5-Freedom is valued.

Freedom is expanded/encouraged. Questioning and thinking are valued/stimulated in all classrooms.

Current Practices


Correlates

Democracy-centered Practices

Some students participate in school.

6-Civic obligation/ participation in school is expected.

Opportunities for involvement extend to every student.


- 
- The background of the slide features a blurred image of a yellow pencil lying on a white notebook with lined pages. The pencil is positioned diagonally from the bottom right towards the center. The notebook is open, and the pages are slightly curved. The overall lighting is soft and warm, creating a professional and educational atmosphere.
- Friedman's context as our Host Culture
 - Because of the three factors listed below, in our view, democracy is the ultimate host culture.
 - A democracy-centered school provides a host culture to support three research-supported factors that promote student achievement:

Factors Linked to Student Achievement

Teacher sense of efficacy

Student resilience

Minority male achievement

- 
- The background of the slide features a close-up, slightly blurred image of a yellow pencil lying on a white, lined notebook page. The pencil is positioned diagonally from the bottom right towards the center. The notebook's pages are visible on the left side, showing horizontal lines. The overall lighting is soft and natural, creating a clean, educational aesthetic.
- In what way does democracy-centered leadership provide a host culture for a the three research-based factors that support student achievement?
Handout

The background of the slide features a stack of books on the left and a yellow pencil lying horizontally on the right. The books have white pages and some have blue or red covers. The pencil is sharpened and has a grey eraser at the tip. The overall scene is brightly lit, creating a clean and educational atmosphere.

Barriers to Democracy-centered Schools

Barriers within the School

- Frequent turn-over of personnel
- Fear of the loss of power (inaccurate understanding of the true source of power)
- Absence of a support culture
- Lack of trust of the “common man”

Psychological Barriers

- Myers-Briggs results - 100% of high school principals, 79 % of elementary principals scored Sensing
- Takes in information through the senses. Tangible reality. Focus on the present. What is rather than what might be.
- Key phrases - facts, present, experience, practicality, realism.

Impact of Personality Preferences

- 71% of high school principals and 21% of elementary principals scored as introverts
- Energy is directed toward the inner world of ideas, information, or thought
- Key phrases - interaction with others is draining, not energizing, prefers to limit contact with others

Implication of Personality Preference...

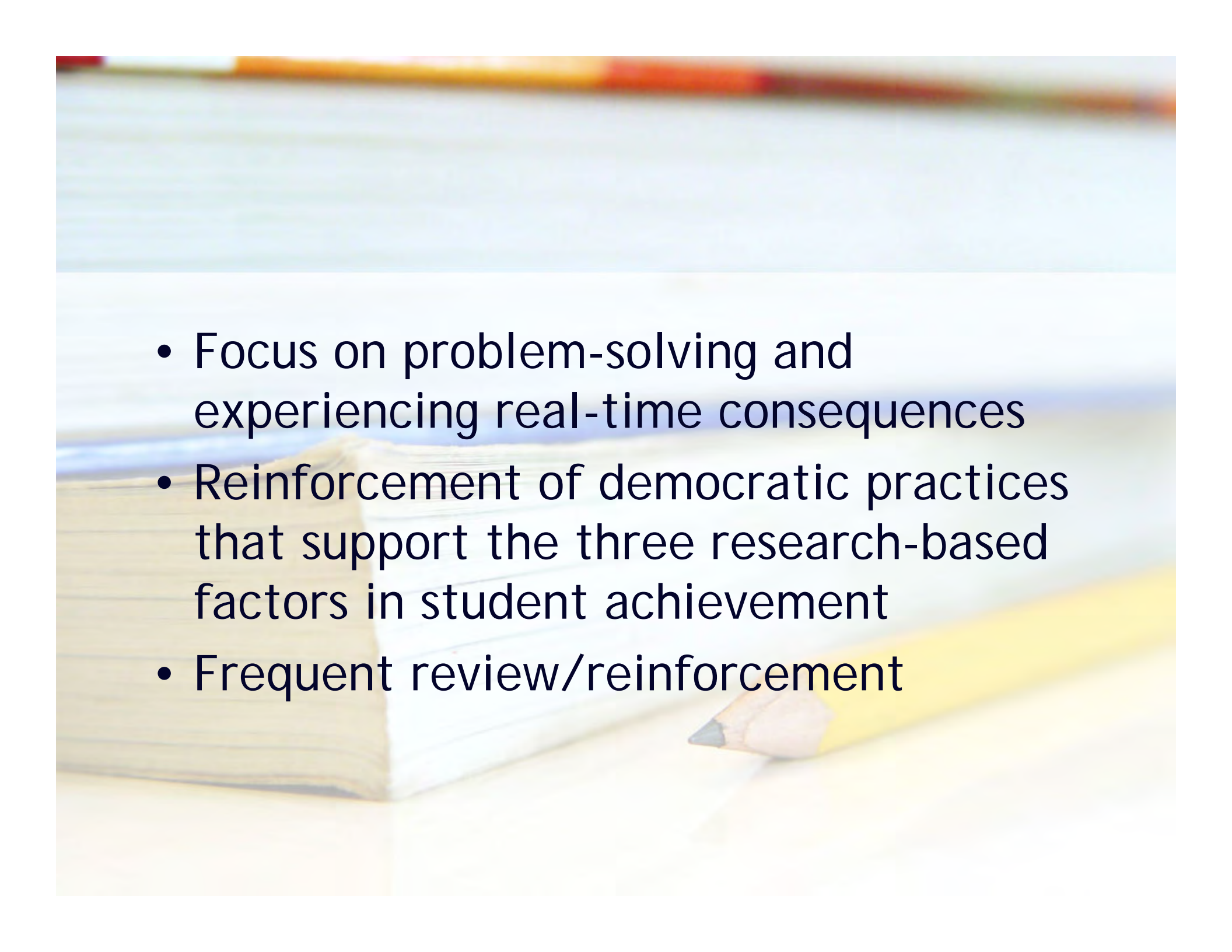
- Implication for the practice of democracy is that the practice of democracy is a leap of faith, especially in an organization where its practice has been quite limited. Sensing individuals are not inclined to such leaps of faith. Those who tend to limit contact with others may not be the best candidates for involving others in decision-making.

Implications for Principal Preparation

- Must be much more robust than currently in order to reinforce democracy-centered schools and overcome in-school and psychological barriers - deep development
- A more robust preparation program will require a scaffolding of democratic dispositions and practices that, increasingly, imbed these in their automatic response repertoire

Scaffolding Sequence for Deep Development

- Cognitive information
- Discussion/cases to deepen understanding
- Visual representation to aid recognition
- Enactment in safe environment
- Practice in a Virtual Principal's Office

- 
- The background of the slide features a blurred image of an open notebook with lined pages and a yellow pencil resting on the surface. The notebook is open to a page with horizontal lines, and the pencil is positioned diagonally across the lower right portion of the frame. The overall lighting is soft and warm, creating a focused and educational atmosphere.
- Focus on problem-solving and experiencing real-time consequences
 - Reinforcement of democratic practices that support the three research-based factors in student achievement
 - Frequent review/reinforcement

Discussion

