

Accountability vs. Transparency and the Differences Between Them

Robert Enlow, EdChoice
Derrell Bradford, 50CAN

What Is Accountability?





Responsibility for Results

Student outcomes Responsibility

Parents Selflessness Test scores

Transparency Honesy

Student outcomes -- can they read, write and do math

Outcomes Student Growth Respect Actions=Words

Family friendly

Money is spent on student learning

Accountable (adj.):
“subject to the
obligation to report,
explain, or justify
something;
responsible;
answerable.”



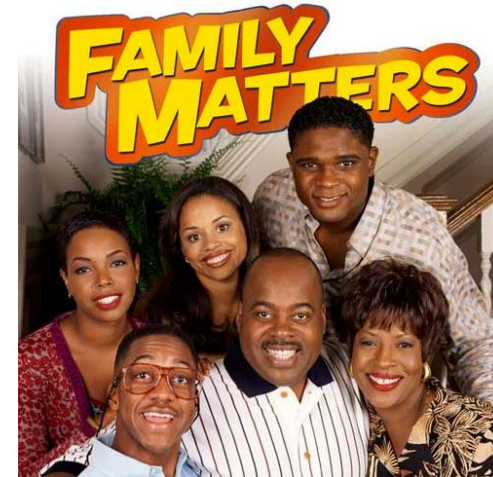
Accountability for What and to Whom?



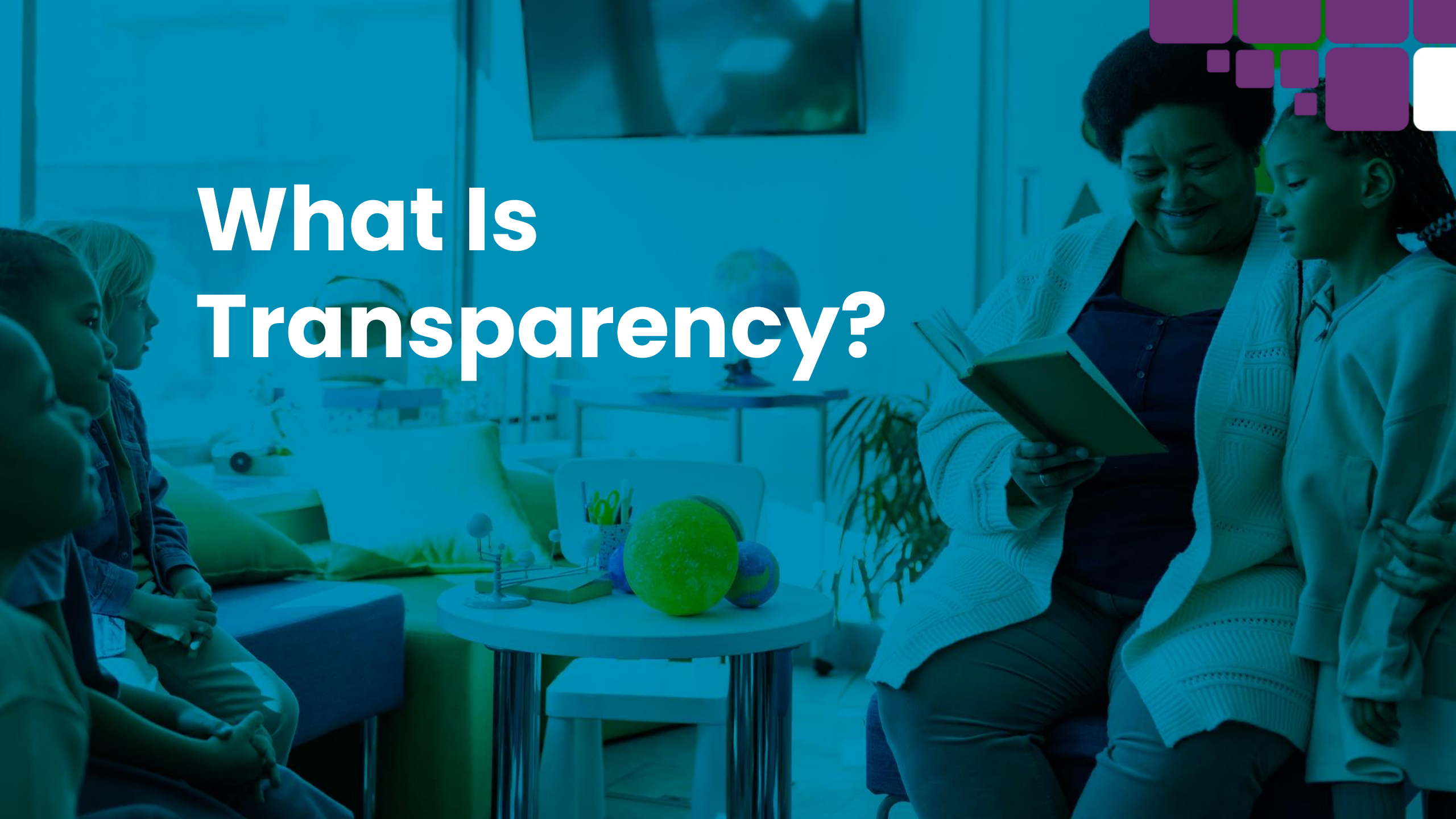
Financial



Academic



What Is Transparency?



Transparent (adj.):
“characterized by visibility or accessibility of information especially concerning business practices; readily understood; easily detected or seen through; free from pretense or deceit.”



THE ACCOUNTABILITY MYTH

Michael Q. McShane, Ph.D.

There are **three ways** that schools are,
or should be, held accountable...

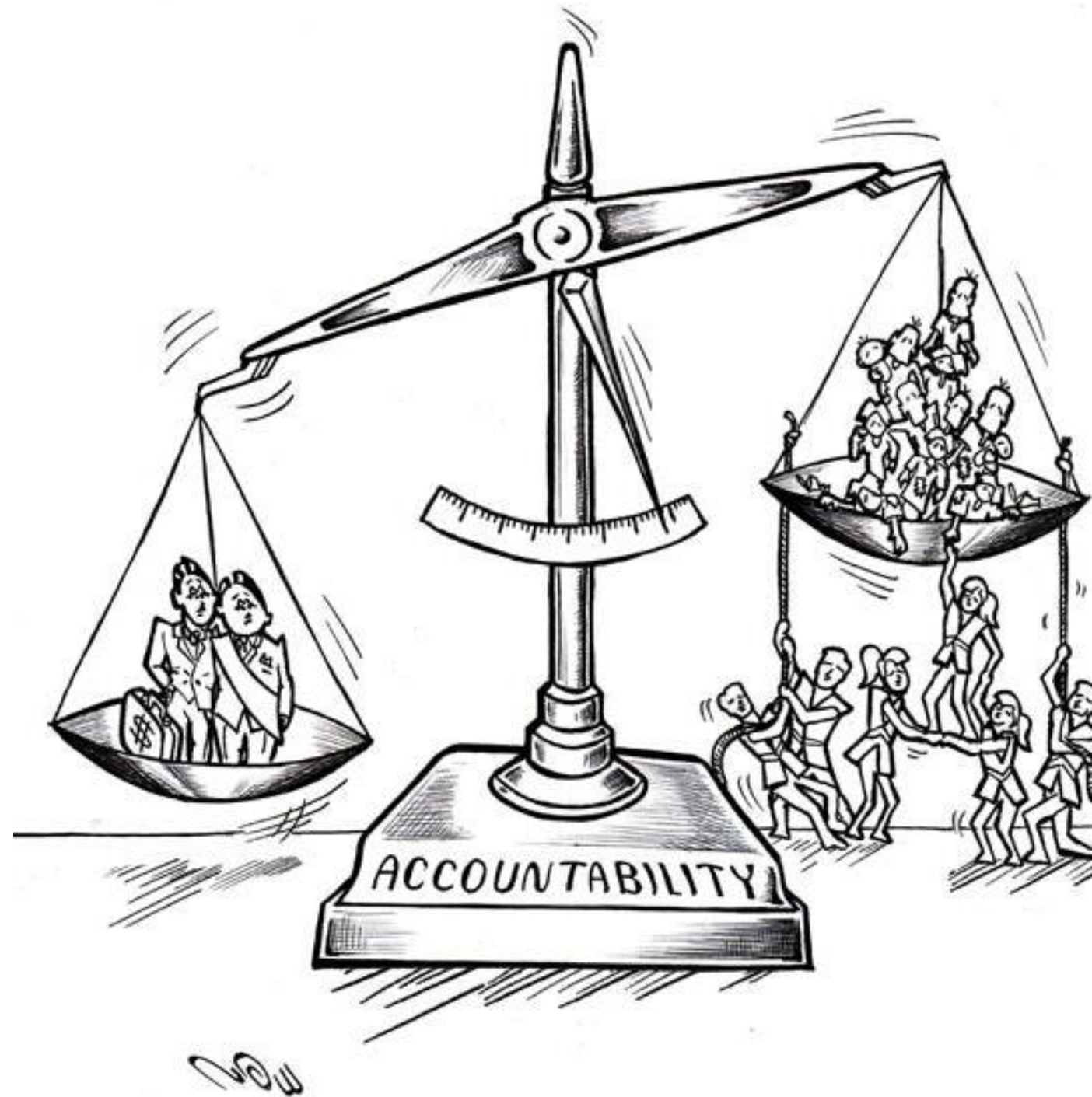
Financial accountability:

Schools should be responsible for how they use the money they are given and should be ready to account for what has been spent and how.



Democratic accountability:

Since schools are funded by the community writ large, they should be able to account for how they are reflecting the wishes of that community. Are they teaching what the community believes should be taught? Are they organizing schools in ways that the community agrees to? Are they spending the community's money in ways that comport with the community's wishes?



Educational Accountability:

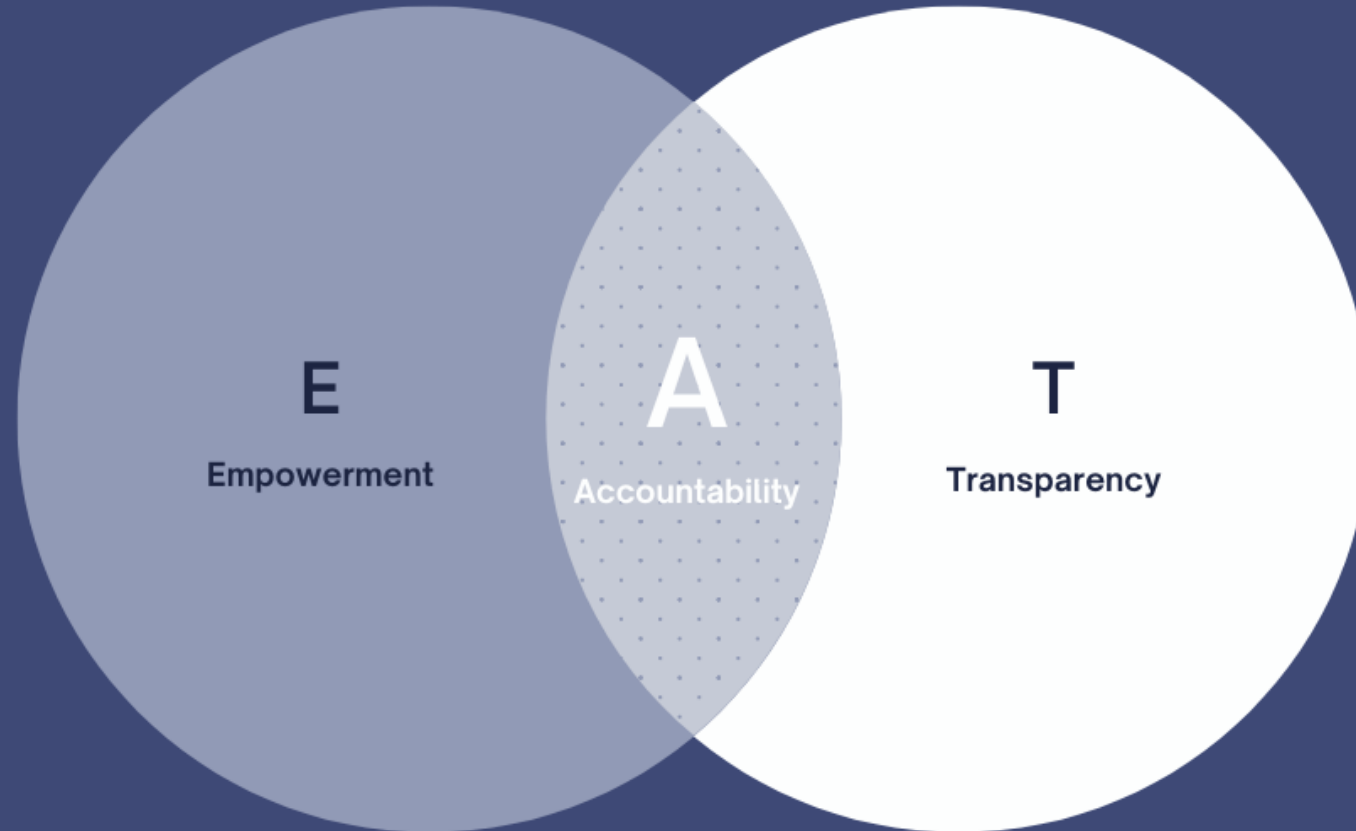
Schools should take responsibility for the quality of the education that the students in their charge receive. They should be able to demonstrate that students are mastering what they are supposed to be learning.



A woman with dark hair, wearing a white cardigan over a dark top, is sitting and reading a book to a young girl with braided hair. The girl is also wearing a white cardigan. They are in a classroom or library setting. In the background, other children are sitting at a table, and there is a globe on a stand. The entire image has a blue tint. In the top right corner, there is a decorative graphic of purple and white squares of various sizes.

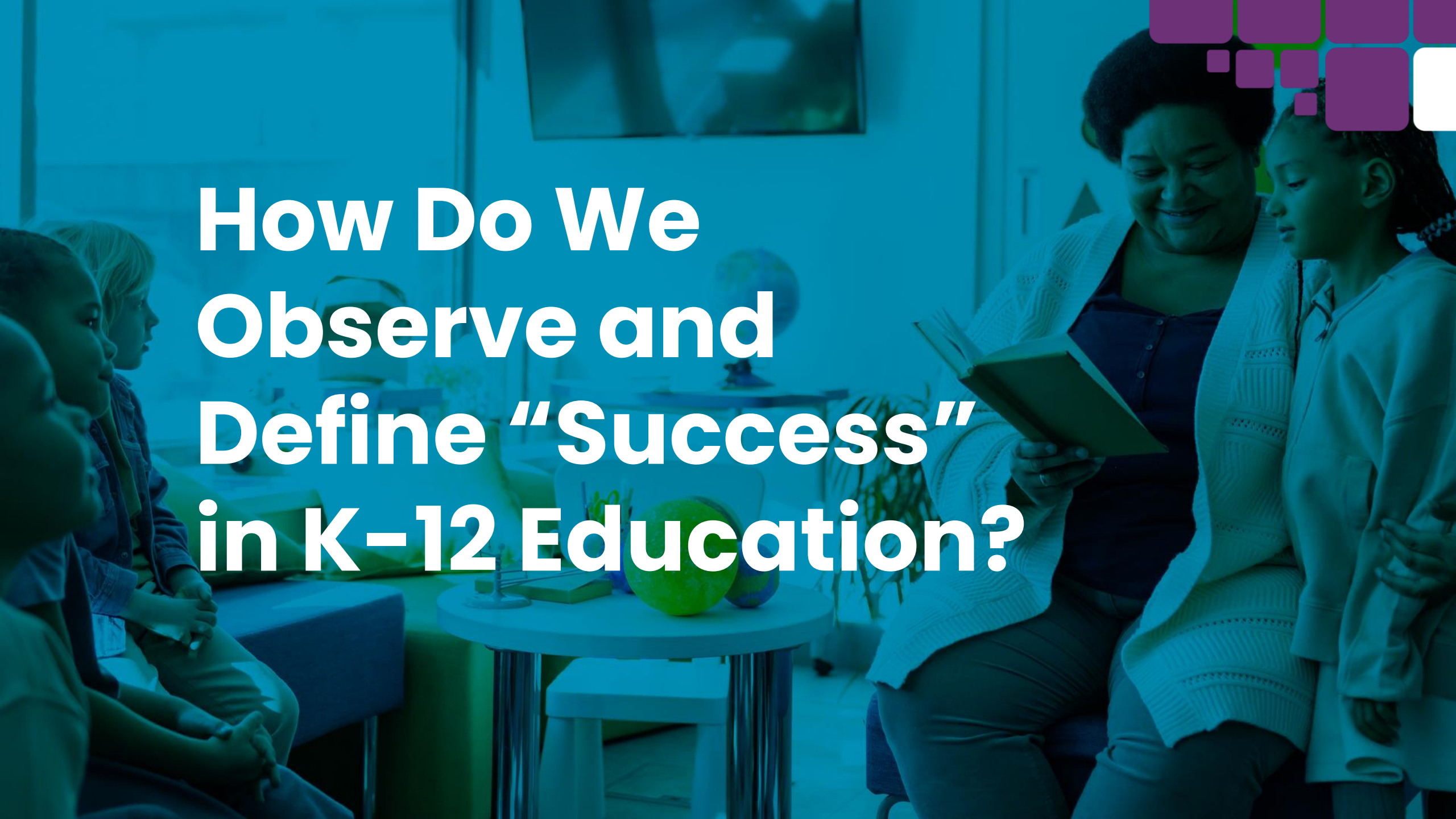
Where's the Difference Between Accountability and Transparency?

Accountability



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“By *EMPOWERING* families to choose where their children attend school, we could deputize millions of parents as school accountability officers. By allowing more families to choose the schools that their children attend, we can see real democratic accountability. These schools will be more democratically accountable because they will reflect the wishes of the polity. Schools that parents want will grow and schools that they don’t won’t. Rather than trying to centrally plan a school system to meet the needs of a community, decision-making can be driven down to the level of the individual citizens and individual families who can start schools and attend schools that reflect their wishes...We can have a pluralistic system for a diverse polity.” – Mike McShane, *The Accountability Myth*

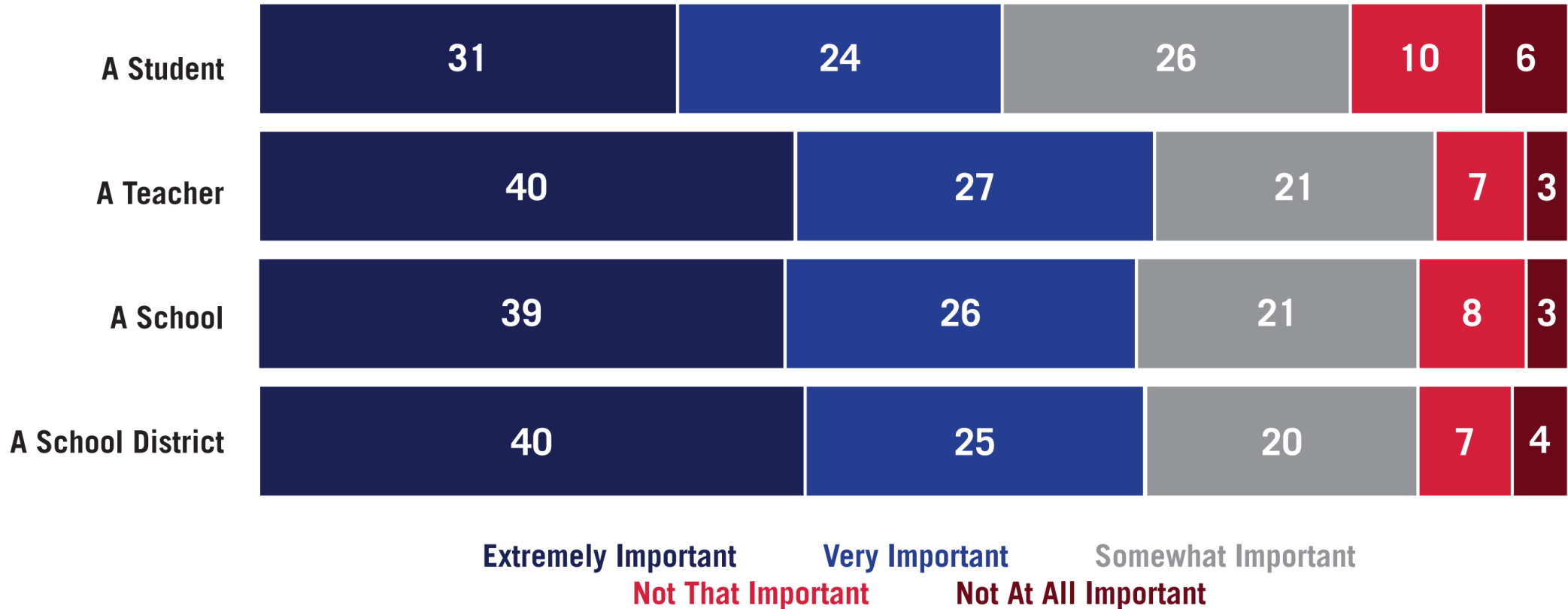
A photograph of a woman sitting on the floor reading a book to a young girl. They are in a classroom or library setting. In the background, other children are sitting at a table. The image has a blue tint and a decorative graphic of purple and white squares in the top right corner.

How Do We Observe and Define “Success” in K-12 Education?

USING STANDARDIZED TESTS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Roughly two-thirds of school parents say standardized tests are an important accountability measure for teachers, schools, and school districts, but less important when it comes to students.

% of Current School Parents



Notes: Respondents were permitted to skip the question, which is not shown.
 Source: EdChoice, 2024 Schooling in America Survey (conducted April 9–April 30, 2024), QNEW4_1