

**Representation** is defined as a real-life example of what could be (Talbert-Johnson, 2001).

**Overrepresentation**, while not directly related to representation, tends to discourage and negatively impact students (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2013). Overrepresentation provides an excess and often inappropriate number of people with the same unique characteristics (Brown, Dennis, & Matute-Chavarria, 2019 & Blanchett, 2006).

It is important to have representation so students can see, dream, and imagine what is possible as it relates to individuals with different characteristics. For example, it may be difficult for a young Black girl to dream of being a district superintendent if she has never seen that modeled by someone with the same unique characteristics as the young Black girl. **In this sense, representation encourages and motivates students to progress.**

**Overrepresentation, while not directly related to representation, tends to discourage and negatively impact students. Practitioners may not know when they are perpetuating the notion of overrepresentation.** For example, one characteristic that is often spoken about in special education is race. If every young Black boy in a classroom has a special education label and others with similar behaviors do not, Black boys would be overrepresented in this classroom. This cycle could continue if the classroom also had a special education practitioner who did not critically reflect on this situation (Glimps & Ford, 2010). The practitioner may refer all the young Black boys in her class for special education assessment, perpetuating the notion of overrepresentation.