

Understanding Implicit Bias and Its Role in Early Learning Environments

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Poll: We'd like to know who you are!

Why does it matter?

- Implicit Bias impacts EVERYTHING!
 - Attractiveness bias (Salter, Mixon, & King, 2012)
 - Height bias (Judge & Cable, 2004)
- Implicit bias predicts the extent to which..
 - Police officers use force when arresting Black children (Goff et al., 2014)
 - Arbitrators decide labor grievances in favor of women over men (Girvan, Deason, Borgida, 2015)
 - Pediatricians recommend less pain medication for Black children than White (Cooper at al., 2012; Sabin & Greenwald, 2012)

ADAPTED FROM DOL, MAUSLAC, & SMITH, 2017

“Black people looting for food, while white people find food”!

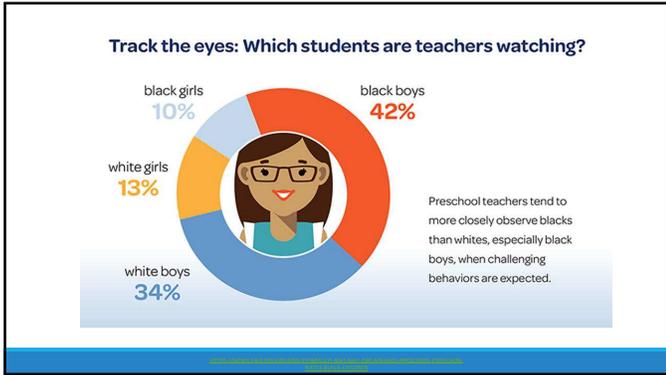


Implicit Bias in Early Childhood

- Early education staff tend to observe Black children more closely, especially when they expect challenging behaviors.
- The nature of the implicit bias seems to differ based on the race of the early educator.
- Same-race empathetic response



Gilliam, Maupin, Reyes, Accavitti, & Shic, 2016





Studies spanning 40 years show that Black children are up to four times more likely to be suspended than White students.

(Bradshaw et al., 2010; Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Milner, 2013; Skiba et al., 2011)



• The New OCR (2016)
Patterns of racial and gender disproportionality:

- **Black boys:** 54% of the preschool population, but 78% of those suspended
- **Black girls:** 20% of preschool female population, but 54% of girls suspended from preschool
- **Black preschoolers:** 3.6 times more likely to be suspended than their White peers

Poll: What do you think of these data?

“Cradle to Prison Pipeline”

- Preschool-to-prison pipeline was coined to describe the disproportionate number of young Black children who are suspended or expelled from early learning environments
- Exclusionary practices:
 - Result in interrupted education
 - Increase the likelihood that Black children experience repeated suspensions and expulsions both in early childhood and beyond
 - Are related to later academic achievement and school dropout rates





- Students of color tend to experience lower quality **instructional practices** than their White peers (Phillips et al., 1994; Pianta et al., 2002)
- Black children generally experience lower quality activity settings and **receive fewer rich, stimulating experiences** than White children (Early et al., 2010)

So, you might be asking...

- What about poverty?
- Aren't black boys just more violent?
- It's just a handful of students...can't we just put them on individual plans?
- Are you saying that all practitioners are racist?

ADAPTED FROM FOX, MAUSKOPF, & SMITH, 2017

What messages are we giving kids about their worth?

By kindergarten entry, many children have been labeled and sorted into categories according to behavior, which has negative effects on children's self-worth, their perception of school as being safe and supportive, and is directly related to chronic absenteeism and suspension.

(Center for Social and Emotional Education and Education Commission of the States, 2007)

Colorblind Ideology

WHAT WE SAY

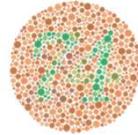
- "I don't see race/color."
- "I believe that we're all equal."

WHAT THIS ACTUALLY MEANS

- "Race doesn't matter."
- "I don't want to talk about race."
- "I don't **truly** see you (e.g., your color, your experiences, your culture)."

Colorblind Ideology

- Colorblindness actually prevents us from thinking critically about race.
- It allows to avoid talking about racial inequity in schools.
- Colorblindness actually leads to more biases.



Un-Learning Implicit Bias

- We must be willing to accept that we do, in fact, have biases, and to make ourselves aware of them.
- We must be determined not only to unearth our own stereotypes, but also to challenge them.
- We need to learn how to exchange those automatic biases for different, more inclusive, notions.

Strategies for Reducing the Impact of Implicit Bias in Early Learning Settings

- Having conversations about race
- Multi-component implicit bias reducing intervention
- Implementing culturally responsive anti-bias teaching practices

Having Conversations about Race

- Facilitates discussions about race within educational settings
- Conditions that need to be in place for self-reflection and unlearning of biases to be successful include **intention, attention, and time.**



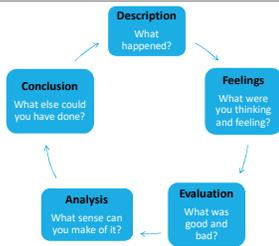
Having Conversations about Race

- Promote reflection about ways to lessen racial inequality and unequal treatment in everyday practices and interactions
- Provide readings and dialogue related to the history of racial inequity in schools, and the factors that lead to lack of educational opportunities for minority groups
- Ask educators hard questions

Retrain the Unconscious Mind

- Be willing to look at ourselves to help identify a bias
- Understand and redirect beliefs
 - Don't suppress them!
- Explore awkwardness or discomfort
 - What triggers you in a particular situation?
- Create opportunities for positive exposure

Reflective Practices



Multi-Component Implicit Bias Reducing Intervention

- Multi-faceted prejudice habit-breaking intervention
- Provides teachers and administrators with a toolkit of strategies that are practiced on a weekly basis to reduce biases
- Before the intervention, all teachers and school personnel take the Black-White Implicit Association Test (IAT) to prompt self-reflection about biases.
- Five strategies then are provided.
- Examples are given about how they might be used in everyday situations.

Multi-Component Implicit Bias Reducing Intervention	
Strategy	Description
Stereotype replacement	Teachers recognize that their response is based on stereotypes. They label the response, reflect on why it occurred, and determine how to avoid the response in the future.
Counter-stereotypic imaging	Individuals keep positive exemplars accessible to challenge a stereotype.
Individuation	Individuals work to prevent stereotypic inferences by gaining information about individuals.
Perspective-taking	Individuals take the perspective of another person within the stereotyped group to reduce the occurrence of group-based evaluations.
Increasing opportunities for contact	Individuals seek out opportunities to interact positively with out group members.

Figure 1. Implicit Bias Habit-Reducing Strategies (Devise et al., 2012)

Culture

- Culture is a huge part of our lives.
- Cultures influences:
 - our views,
 - our values,
 - our humor,
 - how we communicate,
 - our social interactions,
 - and our worries and fears.



Cultural Disconnect



Cultural Orientations

Individualistic

- Individual achievement is recognized and celebrated
- Independence is an important goal
- Children's individual work is displayed

Collectivistic

- Group success is celebrated and valued
- Interdependence and group responsibility is highly valued
- Children's group work is displayed

Cultural Awareness Training

- Implicit bias awareness and how it contributes to systemic racism
- Cultural awareness of own culture
- Cultural awareness of culture of children in classrooms
- Child development within the context of culture

What is culture awareness?

- Involves the ability to stand back from ourselves and become aware of our cultural values, beliefs and perceptions
- Awareness of our own culture is important because it can keep us from projecting our values onto others.

Cultural Awareness Exercise

Try listing all the cultures and identities you have: (This is just a list of suggestions to get you started. Add as many as you think describe you.)

What is your:

- Religion
- Nationality
- Race
- Sexual identity
- Ethnicity
- Occupation
- Marital status
- Age
- Geographic region

Are you:

- A female
- A male
- Disabled
- From an urban area
- From a rural area
- A parent
- A student

Have you ever been:

- In the military
- Poor
- In prison
- Wealthy
- In the middle class
- In the working class

Creating Culturally Responsive Anti-Bias Programs

A pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning ([Ladson-Billings, 1994](#)).



Functions of Culturally Responsive Anti-Bias Programs

- Encourages positive identity development
- Prevents isolation
- Designed to address isolation because it helps children to develop an increased sensitivity to the life experiences of others
- Discourages denial and fear of differences in young children

Components of Culturally Responsive Anti-Bias Practices

- Social emotional learning for young children
 - Recognizes feelings of others
 - Developing empathy
 - Problem solving
- High-quality learning environments that include a focus on warm, responsive interactions with children
- Positive relationships with families

Principles of Culturally Responsive Anti-Bias Pedagogy

- Recognizes the **importance of including children's cultural references** in all aspects of learning.
- Learning takes place within the **context of culture**.
- **Learning environment where all students are welcomed, supported, and provided with the best opportunities to learn** regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Can be positive for children's self-concept
- Focus on teaching equity and social justice

They're not too young to talk about race!

0 At birth, babies look at people. As they get older, they start to notice differences in skin color, hair, and facial features. (Gandy & Rothlin, 2017)

1 Children are paying attention to people's faces and their features. (Gandy & Rothlin, 2017)

2 By 20 months, most children can name the colors red and blue. (Gandy & Rothlin, 2017)

3 Expressions of racial prejudice start to appear. (Harris, 2010)

4 By three, black and white children are beginning to play together. (Harris, 2010)

5 By five, black and white children are beginning to play together. (Harris, 2010)

6 By six, black and white children are beginning to play together. (Harris, 2010)

7 By seven, black and white children are beginning to play together. (Harris, 2010)

8 By eight, black and white children are beginning to play together. (Harris, 2010)

9 By nine, black and white children are beginning to play together. (Harris, 2010)

10 By ten, black and white children are beginning to play together. (Harris, 2010)

Young children notice and think about race. Adults often worry that talking about race will encourage racial bias in children, but the opposite is true. Silence about race reinforces racism by letting children draw their own conclusions based on what they see. Teachers and families can play a powerful role in helping children of all ages develop positive attitudes about race and diversity and skills to promote a more just future—**but only if we talk about it!**

Do some learning of your own to get ready for the conversations with children. Here are some good places to start:

- Raising Race Conscious Children — raisingraceconscious.org
- Teaching Tolerance — teachingtolerance.org
- Endocrine Race — endocrine.org
- Teaching for Change — teachingforchange.org

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Call to Action

- Commit to examining and identifying your own biases
- Search for subtle messages of bias
- Seek accurate information about the cultures of children in your classroom
- Push yourself to read books about racism and bias, even if they make you uncomfortable
- Have courageous conversations about race

As schools “strive to promote development for all children, those from diverse cultures as well as those from the mainstream, meeting the challenge of making everyone’s culture visible will do more than merely improve program practice—it will reshape the entire field. As our understanding of culture’s influence on the development of all people deepens, our understanding of human universals will increase. So as we work to discover the developing cultural child, we at the same time unveil the human child.”

Carol Brunson Day, Concepts for Care: 20 Essays on Infant/Toddler Development and Learning

Equality



The assumption is that everyone benefits from the same supports. This is equal treatment.

Equity



Everyone gets the supports they need (this is the concept of “affirmative action”), thus producing equity.

Justice



All 3 can see the game without supports or accommodations because the cause(s) of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.
