RACIAL BIAS IN SCHOOLS: EVIDENCE AND OPPORTUNITIES

Joseph Williams, PhD
The University of Virginia
Affirm Consulting, LLC
AGENDA

Presentation Objectives:

1. Define Bias
2. Recognize the negative impact of racial implicit bias on student outcomes
3. Identify potential strategies for reducing racial bias in schools
DEFINITIONS

1. **Bias** – is a preference for or prejudice against something.
2. **Implicit bias** – hidden prejudices (negative attitudes) and stereotypes (negative beliefs) that shape what we see, think, and do without our awareness.
3. **Racial Bias** – prejudices and stereotypes about a particular race that results in harmful or preferential treatment of members of that race.
Does ACPS discriminate against students and/or their families? Based on race, ethnicity, ability, gender, age, social status, profession, English language abilities, etc.
EVIDENCE FOR TEACHER BIAS: THE POWER OF EXPECTATIONS
[CHILD] lives with his/her mother, his/her 8- and 6-year-old sisters, and his/her 10-month-old baby brother. His/her home life is turbulent, between having a father who has never been a constant figure in his/her life, and a mother who struggles with depression but doesn’t have the resources available to seek help. During the rare times when his/her parents are together, loud and sometimes violent disputes occur between them. In order to make ends meet, [CHILD’s] mother has taken on three different jobs, and is in a constant state of exhaustion. [CHILD] and his/her siblings are left in the care of available relatives and neighbors while their mother is at work.
EVIDENCE FOR TEACHER BIAS: THE POWER OF EXPECTATIONS
Research suggests that before teachers and staff even have a conversation with a student, they have already formulated several opinions based on that student's race, appearance, and other factors—and begun to form a certain set of expectations.
HOW DOES BIAS AFFECT OUR ACTIONS?

Biases affects us and our decision-making processes in several different ways:

1. **Our Perception** – how we see students and perceive reality.
2. **Our Attitude** – how we react towards certain students. Hinder capacity to feel and express empathy toward students.
3. **Our Behaviors** – how we treat certain students.
4. **Our Attention** – which aspects of a student we pay most attention to.
5. **Our Listening Skills** – how much we actively listen to what certain students say.
6. **Our Micro-affirmations** – how much or how little we comfort certain students in certain situations.
Institutional Bias – A tendency for the rules, policies, practices, and procedures of institutions to operate in ways that result in certain social groups being advantaged or favored and others being disadvantaged or devalued.
INSTITUTIONAL BIAS

School and Districts are comprised of INDIVIDUALS, who although well-intended, harbor hidden prejudices and stereotypes about certain social groups – that influence behavior.
School and Districts have a Culture that includes beliefs, values, norms, standards, narratives, etc... that may reproduce disparities, and inequitable outcomes for some members.
Schools are **INSTITUTIONS** that create **policies**, **procedures** and **practices** that (unintentionally at times) advantage some members and disadvantage others.
When bias operates at the systems or institutional level, it acts as a social force, and instead of impacting people one by one, it affects many people. It can show up in several overt and subtle ways.
Does ACPS discriminate against students and their families? On the basis of race, ethnicity, ability, gender, age, social status, profession, English language abilities, etc.
## EQUITY DASHBOARD

### 2018 - 2019 Equity Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Group</th>
<th>Student Count (PK-12)</th>
<th>Students Identified Gifted</th>
<th>Students with Disabilities (IDEA)</th>
<th>All Students Chronically Absent</th>
<th>High School Students Chronically Absent by Period</th>
<th>Students Suspended (Out of School)</th>
<th>Suspicion Incidents (Out of School)</th>
<th>Students Passing 3rd Grade Reading SOL</th>
<th>Students Passing 3rd Grade Math SOL</th>
<th>Middle School Students Enrolled in High School Math</th>
<th>Students Earning An Advanced Studies Diploma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>14,063</td>
<td>1,296</td>
<td>1,893</td>
<td>1,849</td>
<td>1,284</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1,527</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1,876</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>9,041</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>1,033</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>1,062</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>1,090</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>859</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>4,419</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>1,893</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learners</td>
<td>1,419</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


LIVE CHAT: REACTIONS/QUESTIONS
EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES

1. Bias Identification (Teal, C.R., et al., 2010)
2. Intrinsic Motivation to Change (Byrne & Tanesini, 2015)
3. Intergroup Contact (Kang & Banaji, 2006)
4. Perspective Taking and Empathy Building (Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson, & Galinsky, 2011)
5. Decrease stereotype inducing stimuli (Kang & Banaji, 2006)
6. Individuating (Stewart & Payne, 2008)
7. Accountability (Stewart & Payne, 2008)
## SELF-EVALUATION TOOL

### Educator Self-Evaluation Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Exploring Personal Bias</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strongly Agree</strong></th>
<th><strong>Agree</strong></th>
<th><strong>Neutral</strong></th>
<th><strong>Disagree</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strongly Disagree</strong></th>
<th><strong>N/A</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the last 2 months, I have taken an Implicit Association Test (implicit.harvard.edu) to explore biases I may possess.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have explored readings and information related to implicit bias in the last 3 months.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Analyzing Trends** | **When analyzing grading, evaluation, student feedback, disciplinary referral, mentoring trends, etc., over the last grading period (46 teaching days), I have NOT noticed any prominent differences in my evaluation and engagement with students across identity groups (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, LLS status, SES, etc.)** | | | | | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Evaluating Practices</strong></th>
<th><strong>Reflecting on the previous semester of courses, I have used course materials (case studies, examples, etc.) that feature an array of identities.</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>When depicting diverse groups in my coursework, I seek out opportunities to depict counter-stereotypes.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflecting on my most recent semester, my curriculum included information on implicit bias.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Over the last 6 months, I have frequently engaged in practices aimed at increasing my cognitive control (e.g., mindfulness meditation) in an effort to mitigate the influence of implicit bias in my teaching practices.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I have made intentional decisions to construct diverse teams and facilitate intergroup contact among students and their families over the last 6 months.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

The following form is intended to help health educators evaluate their susceptibility toward relying on implicit bias as well as their orientation toward bias mitigation practices. Please answer each question honestly to allow for a holistic evaluation. In no way is this self-evaluation tool intended for use as a formal metric of an educators’ performance; instead, it is created for individual use by educators seeking to mitigate implicit bias in their teaching practices and increase their capacity for introspection and reflection.
FRAMEWORK FOR OVERCOMING INSTITUTIONAL BIAS

1. Set a clear intention.
2. Lead with data.
3. Diagnose accurately.
5. Reconstruct with objectivity.
6. Build in accountability and ongoing measurement.
Describe who is involved.

1. Who is affected by the problem and how are they affected?
2. Who gains (benefits) from the situation the way it is now?
3. Who loses?
4. Who sees this as a problem?
5. Who might feel threatened by an attempt to erase this problem?
6. Who is doing something about the problem and what are they doing?
7. Why does this problem exist?
   a) Group Base
   b) Institutional (organizational) Based
PRE-WORK REFLECTION QUESTIONS — EXERCISE 2

Role Definition Reflection Questions

1. What is the contribution you want to make as it relates to the specific institutional bias you’ve identified?
2. What power/leverage/influence do you have within the affected institution?
3. How does your current professional role interact with the institutional bias you’ve targeted for erasure?
4. How committed are you to staying the course during the bias erasure journey?
5. What are you willing to sacrifice to ensure the success of this endeavor?
6. Are you willing to personally champion this cause?
7. What credibility do you have, or can you establish to authentically represent this cause?
PRE-WORK REFLECTION QUESTIONS — EXERCISE 3

Cultivating Allies Reflection Questions

1. What is my message? (Hint: It’s about the institutional bias you’ve identified.)
2. How will I handle objections and naysayers?
3. How will I communicate my level of commitment?
4. How will I make space for others to participate with me?
PRE-WORK REFLECTION QUESTIONS — EXERCISE 4

1. What specific bias is at issue?
2. How is this bias affecting me?
3. How am I benefitting from this bias?
4. How am I hurt or limited by this bias?
5. How is this bias affecting my colleagues and this organization’s stakeholders?
6. How might this bias benefit specific demographics?
7. Which groups are hurt or limited by this bias?
8. How will erasing this bias help the aforementioned groups?
9. Who might feel threatened by an attempt to erase this bias?
BARRIERS TO TAKING ACTION

Identify two barriers that might prevent you from addressing institutional bias at your place of employment.

• Self-Imposed Barrier
• External Barrier

Write it down on the blank note card at your table.

Exchange cards with a person who is not standing next to you. Repeat this process three more times.
THANK YOU

Joseph M. Williams, Ph.D
Affirm Consulting, LLC.
Associate Professor of Education
University of Virginia
jmw5dj@Virginia.edu