

FACILITATOR GUIDE SELF-AWARENESS AND SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

OCTOBER 2021

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Illinois Administrative Rule Part 24, Section 24.50

<https://www.isbe.net/DOCUMENTS/24ARK.PDF>

Introduction

- These trainings are intended to help participants gain an understanding of the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards and how to embed practices aligned to the standards into their practice.
- Refer to the notes on each slide and/or this guide for context and talking points.
- These modules are yours to modify. Take or leave what you deem necessary. You may omit or modify content to meet your participants needs. Each module is an open access resource and was developed on plain, white slides to enable institutions of learning to insert their own logo/branding.
- ISBE recommends starting with *Section 1a: Self-Awareness and Relationship to Others*. The remaining trainings may be utilized in any **order** you see fit.

Facilitator Prep

- Share some of the documents with participants in advance so they come ready to the session.
- Review all content and determine if there are areas where you need additional context to feel comfortable presenting.
- Note where you anticipate differing viewpoints on content and prepare for how you will respond to that.
- Determine where breaks will be built into the session.
- Make note of the timing on animated slides.
- Make sure videos are ready at the start (not ads).
- Determine if you will use breakout groups or strategically assign participants. Consider what the racial (and other identity) makeup of the group will be.

Elements of Culturally Proficient Facilitation

- In planning facilitator training, consider how training will build facilitators' skills and abilities on each of the following elements of culturally proficient facilitation.
 - **Assessing Cultural Knowledge:** Ability to understand how participants' identity, culture, and privilege will shape their learning experience and ability to reflect on how their own identity, culture, and privilege will shape interactions with participants.
 - **Valuing Diversity:** Ability to foster inclusion; amplify a diverse range of participant voices; and utilize materials, strategies, processes, and content that value differences.
 - **Managing the Dynamics of Difference:** Ability to demonstrate vulnerability and authenticity and implement mindful inquiry, dialogue, conflict resolution, and creative problem-solving with groups.
 - **Adapting to Diversity:** Ability to customize plans and learning experiences and improvise and adapt facilitation styles in the moment to support participant learning.

- **Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge:** Ability to strategically plan learning experiences in collaboration with institutions of learning to support long-term professional development goals.

Strategies for Training Facilitators

The following strategies can help facilitators develop the elements of culturally proficient facilitation. Each of these strategies gives facilitators an opportunity to plan for, practice, and build their confidence with skills for navigating emotional and complicated conversations pertaining to race and equity.

- Practice “race talk”: Facilitators should practice sharing personal stories about identity, power, privilege, and positionality and talking about their own biases.
- Cultivate self-awareness: Facilitators can build awareness of personal responses to tension or strong emotion and identify tools to use in these situations.
- Prepare to discuss underlying feelings and emotions: Strong feelings and emotions inevitably arise in conversations about race, equity, and privilege. It can be tempting for facilitators to bypass these emotions and stick to the content, but a skilled facilitator is able to name and acknowledge these feelings and emotions. These feelings and emotions often represent a hidden level of dialog. If we focus only on the content -- and not the feelings and emotions that arise around these topics -- we dilute the learning that can happen.
- Validate and hold space for feelings and emotions: This is especially important for participants of color who may feel like their feelings and concerns have been dismissed. Participants of color may also experience intense emotions like anger and grief, and facilitators should prepare themselves for how they can accept and allow expressions of these feelings.
- Creating psychological safety: Discussing topics like race, oppression, and identity feels inherently risky in a professional setting. Psychological safety makes it possible for participants to reflect and experiment, ask for help, and acknowledge mistakes or changes in perspective. Facilitators can help to create psychological safety regarding the content of culturally responsive teaching and leading by acknowledging their own biases and mistakes in the learning process.
- Practice different delivery platforms and methods: Varying contexts, audiences, and settings require the use of different tools. Facilitators can practice identifying and using different tools for content delivery, including small groups, dyads, fishbowl practice, and virtual tools like Padlet, Flipgrid, and Google Classroom. Consider how varying learning tools increases accessibility for different learners.
- Prepare for pushback from participants: Topics of race and equity can be emotionally charged, and facilitators should be prepared for some pushback. Training can help facilitators to understand, predict, and practice responding to rebuttals and pushback.

Content for Facilitator Training

While facilitator learning should be ongoing, the following topics represent content that facilitators should have some level of expertise on prior to facilitating training.

- Unique elements of culturally responsive facilitation: Facilitating on equity and cultural responsiveness varies from more traditional forms of facilitation. Naming these differences can help orient facilitators to how they should deliver content.
- Identity and intersectionality: Facilitators should develop their understanding of their own identity, how it influences their interactions and content delivery, and how participants perceive them.
- Data and storytelling: Facilitators will need to be prepared to identify and share relevant stories to tell the story of inequity and oppression in their communities. It will also be important to ensure that facilitators are using data responsibly, are prepared to help participants understand the ways in which data is not objective, and balance the use of data with individual stories.
- Elements of oppression: Facilitators should have a deep understanding of the roles power and oppression play in schools and communities.
- Brain science behind bias: Facilitators should be prepared to use and teach the brain science of implicit bias and information processing of information. Facilitators can also use the science of how our brains seek safety and avoid threats to create safe adult learning environments. Training should build facilitator understanding that we all bring trauma and emotional responses to this work (including the facilitators) and how we can use this information to support participants as we think about facilitation moves.
- Common vocabulary: Facilitators should clearly understand the vocabulary used in the trainings on equity and cultural responsiveness and be able to appropriately differentiate terms. They should be prepared to use the vocabulary aligned to the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards (see Appendix 1) and support participants in using the appropriate vocabulary as well.

Illinois Administrative Rule Part 24, Section 24.50 Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards

(a) Self-Awareness and Relationships to Others: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders are reflective and gain a deeper understanding of themselves and how they impact others, leading to more cohesive and productive student development as it relates to academic and social-emotional development for all students.

(b) Systems of Oppression: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders understand that there are systems in our society, especially, but not limited to, our school system, that create and reinforce inequities, thereby creating oppressive conditions. Educators work actively against these systems in their everyday roles in educational institutions.

(c) Students as Individuals: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders view and value their students as individuals within the context of their families and communities.

(d) Students as Co-Creators: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders (who fundamentally believe all students are capable) center learning around students' experiences and position them as co-creators, with emphasis on prioritizing historically marginalized students.

(e) Leveraging Student Advocacy: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders will support and create opportunities for student advocacy and representation in the content and classroom

(f) Family and Community Collaboration: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders will partner with families and communities to build rapport, form collaborative and mutual relationships, and engage in effective cross-cultural communication.

(g) Content Selections in All Curricula: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders intentionally embrace student identities and prioritize representation in the curriculum. In turn, students are not only given a chance to identify with the curriculum, they become exposed to other cultures within their schools and both their local and global communities.

(h) Student Representation in the Learning Environment: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders ensure the diversity of their student population is equally represented within the learning environment.

Our Agreements

TALKING POINTS:

- Encourage group to consider agreements and think if any other agreement might be necessary for us to fully engage and support each other on this challenging journey.
- Are there any that participants want to emphasize?
- We believe the most powerful kind of learning does not come from being told what to think but in learning how to think about it for oneself.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Communication Roadblocks to Avoid

TALKING POINTS:

- During this session, you will have a lot of time for discussion with other participants.
- This is important to learning and processing, but we want to put some norms in place for responding for your colleagues.
- Sometimes we respond with what can be called “communication roadblocks,” which invalidate others’ experiences. We often do this with the best of intention – we want to make others feel better. But actually, these kinds of statements make us feel worse. Think about how you feel when someone responds to you with one of these types of statements.
- Commit to avoiding these types of responses in our discussions.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

The purpose of this is to make sure that we are affirming and validating the experiences of people of color as we do this work. Familiarize yourself with these types of responses and be prepared to address them when they arise, especially when they are being used to invalidate the experience of any marginalized group members.

Silence Breakers

TALKING POINTS:

- We are going to talk about a lot of complex and charged topics. This may be new and uncomfortable to you, and you might be tempted to stay silent.
- Part of learning is discussing and integrating what we learn.
- If you are uncomfortable or unsure about sharing, consider using some of these sentence starters/questions to stay engaged.
- They are also in your participant handout.
- They are especially meant to support entering conversation with intellectual humility and curiosity and to reduce fear of losing face

FACILITATOR NOTES:

These can be important for everyone but may be particularly important in supporting members of dominant culture (White participants) in being able to access the conversation authentically. You may want to model what this could look like and encourage participants to refer back to these regularly throughout.

Reflection Questions

TALKING POINTS:

These questions will be used to frame and support our conversations. You will be asked to apply the framework as other material is presented to you. We will work through it together or in your small group with a facilitator to help increase your comfort and facility in using it for the future.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

These slides are included at multiple points throughout the content but feel free to draw on these questions as needed.

Section 1a: Self-Awareness and Relationship to Others

- Reflect on identity and how it shapes lived experiences.
- Reflect on how identity and lived experiences have influenced perceptions of others, their behaviors, and our interactions.
- Identify ongoing opportunities and practices for self-reflection.

What is Identity?

TALKING POINTS:

- Share out both social and personal meanings of identity.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Race is a Social Construct

TALKING POINTS:

This is important context for the rest of the conversation.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This is a complex and complicated but very important topic. Please review resources like [Historical Foundations of Race](#) to ensure that you deeply understand the topic.

You may experience some pushback here from people who want to point to incidences of illnesses or disease that show up in higher rates for people of color. The excerpt below may help to explain how these are actually the result of social inequities, not biological differences.

There are studies to explain racial divisions in health that are actually caused by social inequalities. Yet you have researchers studying high blood pressure, asthma among blacks, etc. and looking for a genetic cause. However, research shows these [illnesses] are the effects of racial inequality and the stress of racial inequality ... Of those who say [race is biological], they usually point to sickle cell anemia as proof that illnesses are race-based. Even if you look at these genetic diseases that seem to run along with race, it's actually caused by environment. Sickle cell is an adaptation in areas with high rates of malaria. You find it in some areas of Africa, Asia, and Europe. It's not about race at all.

Reflection Questions

How does (perspective shared) challenge or expand the way I see the world?	
How does this issue relate to my own experience? How have I been shaped by the issues being addressed?	
Why is it hard for me to accept this as true? What about my life in relation to my race/class/gender might make it difficult for me to see or validate this new perspective?	
What are my reactions? What do my reactions reveal about what I perceive is at risk were I to accept this information?	
What do I need to do differently? If I were to accept this information as valid, what am I called to do?	

Multiple and Complex Identities

TALKING POINTS:

- We all have multiple and complex identities.
- Some of our identities are not visible, but still play a critical role in how we experience the world and show up in all of our spaces.
- But those identities show up differently in different contexts. As a **[fill in facilitator identity]** , I'm thinking about those identities differently in any given moment.
 - When attending a conference that was mostly men, I am thinking most about my gender identity in being the only **woman**.
 - When **teaching** my predominantly Black students, I was thinking a lot about my race – how being both White and LatinX affected not only how I saw them but how my students saw me.
 - And especially now during this pandemic, I **can't NOT think about being a mom** and to my 15-month-old child.

Those of us who have **identities that are part of the dominant culture** (White, Christian, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied male) possess the luxury and privilege of not having to think about those visible identities (race, ethnicity, gender), and can instead be aware of those that are more invisible (being a brother, being a teacher).

But those **whose visible identities are non-dominant** (generally termed **minority, target, marginalized, or underrepresented**) often don't have the luxury of being seen or experienced for certain aspects of their identities that are less visible – being a sister, an athlete, a mom.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

All Identities Come with Different Levels of Power

TALKING POINTS:

Let's build on those ideas of dominant and non-dominant culture and identity.

Each part of our identity comes with a certain level of power and privilege.

Take a moment to note how many of your identities are seen as above or below the line.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This is another place to anticipate some pushback. Participants may try to indicate that they don't see certain identities as "better" or "worse." You may need to remind them that this is less about individual perceptions and more about how systems and institutions are set up to favor those identities "above the line." We'll build on this on the next slide.

Reflection Questions

How does (perspective shared) challenge or expand the way I see the world?	
How does this issue relate to my own experience? How have I been shaped by the issues being addressed?	
Why is it hard for me to accept this as true? What about my life in relation to my race/class/gender might make it difficult for me to see or validate this new perspective?	
What are my reactions? What do my reactions reveal about what I perceive is at risk were I to accept this information?	
What do I need to do differently? If I were to accept this information as valid, what am I called to do?	

Identity Wheel

TALKING POINTS:

Take a moment to reflect on your answers.

We'll take a Zoom poll now.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

ZOOM POLL

Which of your identities do you think about most often?

Race/Ethnicity

Religious/ Spiritual Affiliation

Physical, Emotional, Developmental (Dis)ability

Age

National Origin

First Language

Socioeconomic Status

Family Unit

Gender

Sexual Identity

Which of these identities do you think least about?

Race/Ethnicity

Religious/ Spiritual Affiliation

Physical, Emotional, Developmental (Dis)ability

Age

National Origin

First Language

Socioeconomic Status

Family Unit

Gender

Sexual Identity

Which identity do you think others notice about you first?

Race/Ethnicity

Religious/ Spiritual Affiliation

Physical, Emotional, Developmental (Dis)ability

Age

National Origin

First Language

Socioeconomic Status

Family Unit

Gender

Sexual Identity

Breakout Groups

TALKING POINTS:

Go through bullet points.

Go through community agreements, as needed.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Breakout Session 1 ... Most Often

- **Prompt 1:** Which identity do you think about most often?
 - **Serial Sharing:** Share your name and position, then your response to the **Which** and **Why** reflection questions. *(30-45 seconds per group member, 4-6 minutes total)*
 - **Group Discussion:** Based on what you shared and what you learned from others, discuss the other reflection question as a group. *(4-5 minutes)*

Breakout Session 2 ... Least Often

- **Prompt 2:** Which identity do you think about least often?
 - **Serial Sharing:** Share your response to the **Which** and **Why** reflection questions. (30-45 seconds per group member, 4-6 minutes total)
 - **Group Discussion:** Based on what you shared and what you learned from others, discuss the other reflection question as a group. (4-5 minutes)

Breakout Session 3 ... How Others See Us

- **Prompt 3:** Which identity do you think others notice about you first?
 - **Serial Sharing:** Share your name and position, then your response to the **Which** and **Why** reflection questions. *(30-45 seconds per group member, 4-6 minutes total)*
 - **Group Discussion:** Based on what you shared and what you learned from others, discuss the other reflection question as a group. *(4-5 minutes)*

Breakout Session 1a ... Dominant Culture and Privilege

Working with partner who shares a **dominant culture identity**, draw on experiences from your own life in order to generate examples of how your **internalized privilege** (as common members of the group identity you share) manifests themselves.

Breakout Session 1b ... Non-Dominant Group and Oppression

Working with partner who shares a **non-dominant culture/identity**, draw on experiences from your own life in order to generate examples of how **internalized oppression** (as common members of the group identity you share) manifests themselves.

Cultural Reference Points

TALKING POINTS:

Now, let's examine some of our lived experience.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

[Hand out cultural reference points worksheet.]

Do all three steps (on the next three slides) before having participants share their answers.

After Step 2, move on to Step 3 before sharing with the group.

Our own lived experiences become our cultural reference points, and they influence our expectations of others and our interpretations of their behaviors or our interactions. It can be helpful to remember that students, teachers, and school leaders all have different cultural reference points.

ASK:

What would help you to pause and consider the different cultural reference points in play when you are having a difficult interaction with a student or teacher?

INSTRUCTIONS

The following activity offers an opportunity both for self-reflection and for bridge-building. Feel free to start with a subset of questions and then expand as it makes sense for your group and schedule. Questions have been broadly broken out based on identity, cultural expectations, and lived experiences. You can tackle one section at a time or choose a few questions from each category.

STEP 1

Use this activity to gain a better sense of what you know and believe, and how you came to know and believe these things. First, review these questions (or a subset of these questions) by yourself, making notes for self-reflection.

Identity

- How did your family identify racially or ethnically?
- Where did you live -- urban, suburban, or rural community?

- What is the story of your family in America? Has your family been here for generations, a few decades, or just a few years?
- How would you describe your family's economic status -- middle class, upper class, working class, or low income? What did that mean in your day-to-day life?
- Were you raised with a particular religion?
- Were you raised with conservative, liberal, or other values?
- What were your family's attitudes and expectations about attending college? Were you the first in your family to attend college? If not, who did?
- What was your family's attitude about the people in power?

Cultural Expectations

- Who were the heroes celebrated in your family and/or community? Who were the "bad guys"? What characteristics or qualities did the heroes and bad guys embody?
- What metaphors, analogies, parables, or "witty" sayings do you remember hearing from family members?
- What were primary messages of your upbringing? What were you taught about respect and what it looked like? What about disrespect?
- What were the values, principles, and beliefs that your family adheres to (particularly pertaining to education, work, lifestyle, money, and expression of emotions)? What conclusions did you draw about people who did not follow these beliefs?
- What was shunned or shamed in your family?
- What earned you praise?
- How did you learn to respond to emotional displays -- crying, anger, happiness?
- What did you learn about conflict and how to address it?
- How did your family handle time? (e.g., Was it something not to be wasted? Were you always fashionably late?)
- How were you expected to interact with authority figures?
- As a child, how did you address adults? Did you call adults by their first name or by a courtesy title (e.g., Mr., Mrs., etc.)?
- Were you allowed to question, challenge, or talk back to adults? What would happen if you did?
- What did you learn about independence and being self-sufficient?

Lived Experiences

- Who did you live with growing up?
- What was school like for you?
- How did teachers interact with you?

- How did your teachers and parents/guardians interact with one another?
- How were your parents/guardians involved in your academic life?
- How connected or disconnected from the larger world was your family, your school, your town?
- How did you make sense of people who had material wealth and who didn't?
- Did you see yourself reflected in movies and TV shows when you were growing up? What about in books? Toys? History books? If you saw yourself reflected in these characters, how were they portrayed? Were they the heroes? Villains? Victims? Were they complex characters you could identify with or were the shallow stereotypes?
- Have you ever had anyone doubt, dismiss, or minimize an experience that was formative to you? If so, how did it feel? How did it affect your feelings about that person?

How do your answers to these questions inform your expectations for students and your interpretations of their behavior? How might your interpretations of student behavior differ if you answered these questions differently?

STEP 2

Next, share your answers with a partner so you can see similarities and differences.

- How were your experiences similar?
- How were your experiences different?
- What did you learn about your partner that surprised you?
- What did you learn about your partner that challenged your assumptions?

STEP 3

Finally, notice any judgments that you have about experiences or beliefs that are different from yours.

- Did you find yourself disbelieving anything your partner shared, wondering if they remember it correctly?
- Did you find yourself judging or evaluating the experiences of your partner, thinking that anything they shared sounded hard or sad?

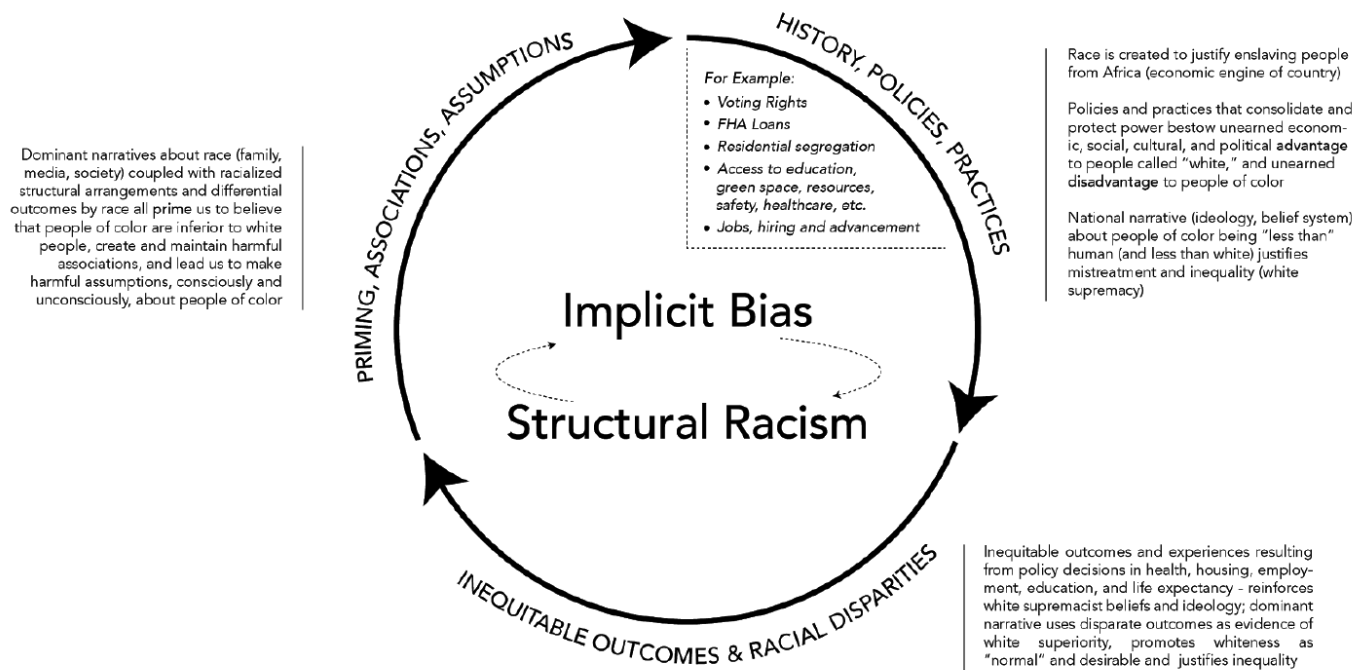
When you are working with students or families who have had different experiences than you, how might these judgements or evaluations affect your interactions with them?

WANT TO DIVE DEEPER?

Step 1 covers only a small portion of one's culture. If you would like to dive deeper into self-reflection, consider some of the following topics:

- Family
- Gender
- Racial Identity
- Ethnicity
- Nationality
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Language
- Friends
- Religion
- Schooling
- Geography
- Socioeconomic Status
- Political Views
- Social Life
- Ability and Disability
- Health (mental and physical)
- Other

Implicit Bias and Structural Racism



TALKING POINTS:

Implicit bias is not something that happens to us on an individual level – it is deeply connected to the systems we live in, and as it is reinforced, we continue to build it into our systems.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Give participants some time to read this in their handout. There will be time for reflection after the next slide, but if you feel like participants need some time to process this before moving on you should create the space for that.

Cycle of Socialization

TALKING POINTS:

Now let's look at how this plays out for us on an individual level.

We are born into this system you saw on the previous slide and we receive these messages early on by family and friend, as well as institutions like schools, churches, and the media.

We are subtly (and sometimes not subtly) rewarded or positively reinforced when we act according to this socialization. We are punished when we question things or push back.

To avoid being isolated or ostracized from our groups, we typically go along with these socializations and the cycle begins again.

When we are aware of this cycle, we can begin to make choices to break the cycle.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Facilitator's should become familiar with some of the examples of history and policy – nationally and locally, incorporating history and policy from the local context (e.g. e.g. sundown towns, red-lining, Red Summer of 1919, school segregation/integration, MLK's housing march in Chicago, founding of NAACP after race riots in Springfield, Elmwood Park CUSD 401 losing recognition in 2006 for not enrolling immigrant students, proration of General State Aid, etc.)

Ask participants to share their own knowledge of history/policy from where they have grown up and resided.

Reflection Questions

How does (perspective shared) challenge or expand the way I see the world?	
How does this issue relate to my own experience? How have I been shaped by the issues being addressed?	
Why is it hard for me to accept this as true? What about my life in relation to my race/class/gender might make it difficult for me to see or validate this new perspective?	
What are my reactions? What do my reactions reveal about what I perceive is at risk were I to accept this information?	
What do I need to do differently? If I were to accept this information as valid, what am I called to do?	

What is Bias?

- Bias: A judgment made even with compelling data and information to the contrary.
- Unconscious Bias: A judgment made without being aware that we are doing so.

TALKING POINTS:

What is unconscious bias? We are only aware when we pause and reflect and really examine what's going on there. Sometimes we get to reflection and we can't pinpoint the time where we formed that belief..

Unconscious bias doesn't take you off the hook; it just forces you to do more work. We want to be cautious about these biases when interacting with students and families and working in teams, as well as when managing and developing talent.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

See [Test Yourself for Hidden Bias](#) for additional context, plus talking points regarding bias, prejudice, and discrimination.

Shared Understanding

TALKING POINTS:

We want to go over some shared understandings about bias before we move on.

(Go through the shared understandings with elaboration, where needed.)

FACILITATOR NOTES: It is important to acknowledge that this might not actually be shared by all participants. There might be some resistance to these ideas:

1. Reiterate that we consider these points to be true, not up for debate.
2. Tell participants to make note of any of these ideas that they are not sure about or resistant to, and let them know this is where their learning needs to begin.
3. Invite participants who are struggling with this to speak to you during a break. **DO NOT engage in a debate about this during the training as doing so gives time and attention to ideas that might be harmful or invalidating to participants of color.**

Reflection Questions

How does (perspective shared) challenge or expand the way I see the world?	
How does this issue relate to my own experience? How have I been shaped by the issues being addressed?	
Why is it hard for me to accept this as true? What about my life in relation to my race/class/gender might make it difficult for me to see or validate this new perspective?	
What are my reactions? What do my reactions reveal about what I perceive is at risk were I to accept this information?	
What do I need to do differently? If I were to accept this information as valid, what am I called to do?	



TALKING POINTS:

(Note: these slides are animated. Make sure you know when to click through.)

Our brain's automatic, unconscious categorizing can be extremely helpful, but it's also why we have biases. To demonstrate, take a moment to envision an ex-convict.

<click>

Is this who you were envisioning?

Our brains help us by categorizing people, but people don't fit into nice and neat categories.

Were these the images that came to your mind? They weren't what came to mind for me.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Nelson Mandela and Martha Stewart

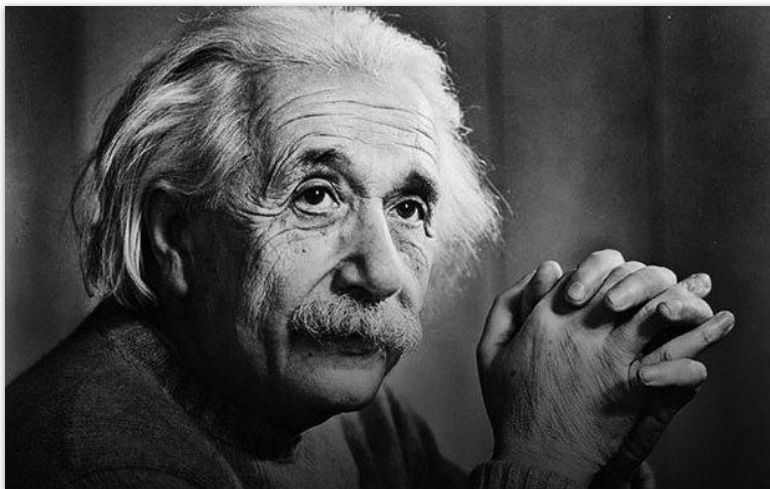
TALKING POINTS:

Let's look at another example. Envision a refugee.

<click>

Is this who you were envisioning?

FACILITATOR NOTES: Mila Kunis and Albert Einstein



Verna Myers Video

https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_toward_them

FACILITATOR NOTES: Go to next slide.

Breakout Session

Group Discussion:

Based on what you learned from the video, discuss the reflection questions as a group.

- **Reflections:**

- What did you notice about the way she talked about her biases?
- How did her bias go from unconscious to conscious?
- What resonates with your personal and professional experiences?

Commitment

TALKING POINTS:

We are going to close out by talking about commitments toward making schools and classrooms a welcoming environment for students, families, and colleagues. On a piece of paper or Post-it, please independently reflect in writing on the following prompts:

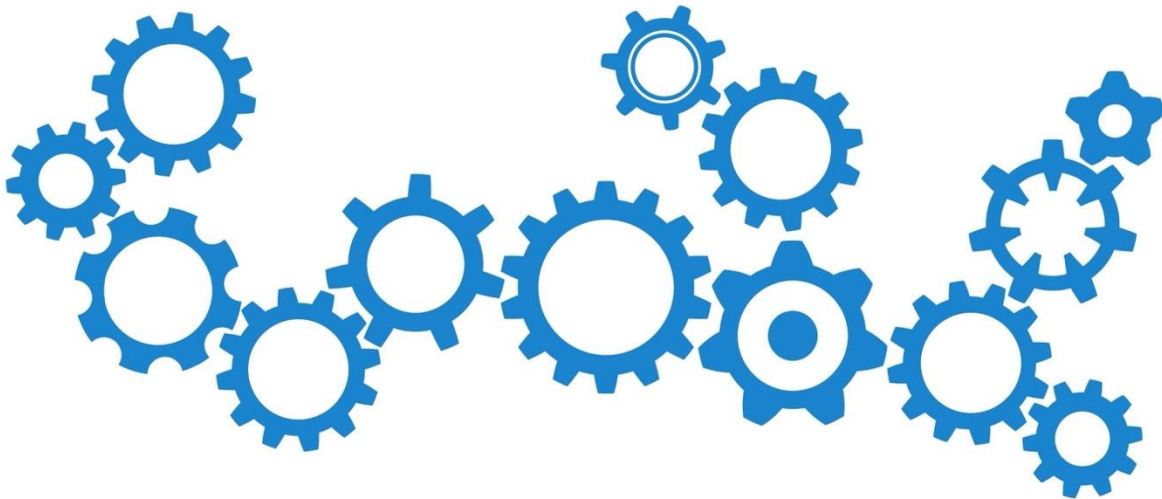
FACILITATOR NOTES:

Objectives

Section 1b: Systems of Oppression:

- Identify ways in which systems of inequity have impacted both educators and students.
- Examine how power and privilege shape systems of oppression.

Any system produces what it was designed to produce.



Effects of Oppression on the Learner's Brain

TALKING POINTS:

As students in such communities enter school, they are already managing to live in an oppressive system, which means that their survival mechanisms can kick in quickly. Constant messages that they are inferior, not capable, or not worthy have a cumulative effect on students – whether these messages are implicit or explicit or come from media, institutions, authority figures (police, former teachers, etc.), or peers. Many students in these communities are less hopeful about their job and life prospects, and success in school may not seem relevant to their lives. Institutions, including schools, perpetuate these inequities and may have been experienced as places that are not to be trusted. This can result in a student experiencing a consistent state of stress or threat in which they are being triggered by actions or situations that may seem innocuous to the teachers or other adults in the institution.

Negative experiences have a powerful impact on the human brain, which is wired to recognize threats more readily than rewards. Research in neuroscience has revealed that the brain responds to perceived social threats in the same manner as threats to survival. When a person perceives a threat, one of the following survival responses is triggered in the brain -- fight, flight, freeze, appease, or dissociate. In the brain, each of these responses includes a dramatic increase in cortisol (commonly referred to as a "stress hormone") and a decrease in oxygen and glucose available for brain functions that support cognitive reasoning. Therefore, when someone perceives a social threat, they are unable to reason clearly or take in new learning.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Five Domains of Social Needs

TALKING POINTS:

For marginalized students who are highly attuned to potential dangers, survival mechanisms can kick in quickly in response to a perceived social threat. Neuroscientist David Rock has developed the acronym “SCARF” to refer to five key domains of human social needs: Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, and Fairness.

In schools, when students feel threatened in any of these domains, they most frequently display signs of fight, flight, or dissociation.

This can look like:

- Fight: Frequent disruption, negative language, physical and/or verbal conflicts.
- Flight: Walking away from authority figures, chronic absences, actively avoiding interactions/meetings.
- Dissociate: “Spacing out,” not doing work, seeming non-responsive or apathetic.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Dena Simmons' TED Talk

https://www.ted.com/talks/dena_simmons_how_students_of_color_confront_impostor_syndrome#t-188150

TALKING POINTS:

- Give 2 minutes after the video to note response to the question.
- Ask for responses to the group.
- Note any responses that acknowledge that a sense of not belonging can feel traumatic and any responses that acknowledge how widespread this sense of not belonging is for students of color.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Micro-Messages

FACILITATORS MODEL how micro-messages play out. Examples to model include:

- School leader walks into a classroom and gregariously greets one student, asks about their baseball tournament, and what they thought of the football game on Sunday; he then greets the next student with a very polite smile and asks if they had a nice weekend and quickly moves on.
- During student presentations, a teacher is distracted and looking at computer, but is very engaged and participative (verbally and non-verbally) during another student's presentation.

TALKING POINTS:

ASK:

What are some micro-affirmations and micro-inequities you heard in Dena Simmons' talk?

- Many micro-inequities are not conscious. But affirming others can become a conscious as well as unconscious practice that prevents unconscious slights. Micro-affirmations are tiny acts of opening doors to opportunity, gestures of inclusion and caring, and graceful acts of listening. Micro-affirmations lie in the practice of generosity, in consistently giving credit to others, in providing comfort and support when others are in distress, when an idea that did not work out, or as a result of a public attack. Micro-affirmations include the myriad details of fair, specific, timely, consistent, and clear feedback that help a person build on strength and correct weakness.
- We send 2,000 to 4,000 micro-messages each day.
- Researchers cite that in the space of a 1-minute conversation, each individual will send between 40 and 50 micro-messages to one another. These small bits of meaning occupy a continuum with positive micro-affirmations on one end and negative micro-inequities on the other. In the case of micro-inequities, researchers believe that these negative micro-messages are rooted in our unconscious bias.
- Micro-messages might be small, but they can shut down potential over time.
- In the moment, they're little things, not a big deal, but you notice it, and other people around you probably notice it. It's like water dripping on a stone – over time it wears the stone down.

ASK:

What are some ways that you might better understand micro-messages you are sending? (For example, video yourself and analyze it. Ask students about it directly, but only if you are willing to accept their responses without being defensive.)

Examples to create more positive micro-messages:

- Actively listen and solicit ideas
- Ask questions
- Attribute credit
- Monitor facial/body
- Monitor greetings
- Respond constructively to disagreement
- Listen without interruption

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Concept "claimed" by Mary Rowe at MIT.

Student Voices

Prior to video: Facilitator prepare participants for the video. Ask group members what resonated with them as they reflect on the video after viewing it.

In the [Color Lines](#) video, what impact did the teachers have on the educational and life experiences of the students featured?

TALKING POINTS:

A teacher's personal biases can influence their interactions with students, families, and stakeholders who make up the community. These biases can come out in ways that are both conscious and unconscious. In this video, you'll hear from students who experienced bias in school. As you watch the video, listen for what impact teachers had on the educational and life experiences of the eight young men in the video. Capture your reflections on the HANDOUT provided.

ASK:

Ask participants to share their thoughts in small groups.

Share-out: Lift two or three key points from the groups.

Building awareness can help us avoid having the impact on our students that these young men spoke about.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Focus on how participants can promote meaningful communication between families and teachers; empower families to advocate for their children; promote equal partnerships between stakeholders that inform and influence school policies, practices, and programs; and avoid letting their biases negatively impact their partnerships with families by promoting an inclusive classroom atmosphere for families and facilitating collaboration on an ongoing basis.

Microaggressions

TALKING POINTS:

In the next few slides, you'll see the word "microaggression." Let's take a moment to define this. Call on a participant to read slide.

These pictures were part of a project by photographer [Kiyun Kim](#). She asked her friends at Fordham University's Lincoln Center campus to "write down an instance of racial microaggression they have faced."

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Reveal pictures one at a time and call on a volunteer to read (animated slide) and then give an example of what would be appropriate.

For more context, see [21 Racial Microaggressions You Hear on a Daily Basis](#).

TALKING POINTS:

Here are two final examples.

Ask for other types of examples they can think of that they may have accidentally done themselves, have had done to them, or have heard/seen done.

Ask how these apply to their school context and if they can think of any others they may face in their school. How would they handle a microaggression if they heard it?

FACILITATOR NOTES:

As a facilitator, this is an opportunity to share your own learning in a vulnerable way, acknowledging where you have also committed microaggressions.

Effects of Language

TALKING POINTS:

These terms do have legal connotations, but just for a moment, consider how the words shape our assumptions? What about how these terms might shape how students think about themselves?

FACILITATOR NOTES:

TALKING POINTS:

ASK:

Ask a participant to add headline in the chat but don't press enter just yet (or write it down on a card). Have everyone hit enter or exchange cards at the same time.

ASK:

What does this headline communicate about students? What about the headlines you wrote?

ASK:

How would you rewrite this headline?

FACILITATOR NOTES:

For this slide, you are highlighting the issue with the headline published with this data. (As a whole, English Learners (ELs) still lag behind in terms of academic achievement – this headline is animated and should be shared after they share theirs.) This headline put the problem on ELs, when the reality is more likely that ELs are lacking adequate support.

TALKING POINTS:

In TNTP's Opportunity Myth report, we saw that students – across districts – have big goals. Almost 95% want to attend college – and that finding holds regardless of students' racial or language background. We also saw that these same students have concrete career aspirations and are making choices to achieve their concrete goals.

Additionally, by the time students get to high school, 70% of them have a concrete career goal that would require they get a four-year degree.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Key points we are trying to convey – when asked, almost all students say they want to go to college.

Effects of Language

TALKING POINTS:

We know almost all students want to go to college but we see big differences in college completion rates by race.

ASK:

What are some explanations you've heard to explain the data?

FACILITATOR NOTES:

You may need to mention that these explanations might not feel good to say, but we want to make sure we are uncovering mindsets and beliefs. The question makes it feel a little safer by giving them the opportunity to attribute mindsets and beliefs to others for now. Some explanations or beliefs that might need to be uncovered (so they can be addressed) are things like: Their families don't value education in the same way, or those students don't actually care about going to college, or college education is not valued in their community. Participants might also raise issues like costs and generational wealth.

Data Through the Lens of the Observer

TALKING POINTS:

ASK:

What do you notice about the two lists?

One is system-based; one is about the individual.

ASK:

Where are interventions primarily focused? Where is the actual power?

Data is often viewed through the lens of the observer and is often focused on individually centered problem-solving. We want to encourage you to look at data through a systems lens to get at the challenge.

ASK:

How does this shift how you think about student- or school-level data?

ASK:

Take 5 minutes and identify one piece of data you use on a regular basis. How might you interpret that data differently in the future?

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Reflection Questions

TALKING POINTS:

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Give participants time for silent solo reflection on these questions. Use your judgement to determine whether your group would benefit from sharing out and debriefing some of their responses.

Commitments

TALKING POINTS:

We are going to close out with making commitments towards making schools, classrooms, and central office a welcoming environment for students, families, and colleagues. On a piece of paper or post-it, please independently in writing reflect on the following prompts:

FACILITATOR NOTES: