PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK SELF-AWARENESS AND SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

OCTOBER 2021

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. Culturally responsive teaching and leading benefits all students by improving their ability to learn and process information, and by helping students to feel safe and connected to their school community. These trainings are designed to cover foundational and introductory content aligned to the Illinois Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading standards.

The table below lists the three training topics and the standards that align with each topic.

TOPIC	STANDARDS
Self-Awareness and Systems of Oppression	Self-Awareness and Relationships to Others Systems of Oppression
Curriculum and Learning Environment	Systems of Oppression Students as Co-Creators Leveraging Student Advocacy Content Selections in All Curricula Student Representation in the Learning Environment
Students, Families, and Communities	Students as Individuals Students as Co-Creators Family and Community Collaboration

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.

Agreements help maintain a safe, supportive, and active learning environment.

Our agreements	What they look like in action
Be engaged and maintain confidentiality	Make the personal commitment to remain emotionally, intellectually, and socially involved in the dialogue. Seek to understand, not to agree. Honor privacy by avoiding "who said what."
Speak to and listen for one's own truth	Be open about your feelings and experiences – not just saying what you think others want to hear. Be open to the experiences of others, not comparing them to your own. Consider your own power dynamics and how it shapes what you see/hear and what you do not see/hear.
Experience discomfort	Stay focused on disrupting institutional oppression and building inclusive leadership skills. It is through dialogue — even when uncomfortable — that awareness happens and change begins.
Expect and accept non-closure	This work is ongoing. Be willing to take risks, sit through silence, and accept that this is about changing yourself and not others.

Adapted from Glenn E. Singleton & Curtis Linton, Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools. 2006. pp.58-65. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Avoid Communication Roadblocks

Problem-Solving	"Have you tried x, y, or z?"
Blame	"Do you think it might be because of the way you …?"
Coldness	"It's for your own good." "You'll be better for it."
False Assurance	"Oh, I'm sure it's nothing." "It will all turn out fine."
Judgement	"You're being overly sensitive."
Questioning	"Did that really happen?" "Are you sure you heard him correctly?" "Are you sure you are remembering that correctly?"

Silence Breakers* are prompts we may use to address common challenges in cross-racial discussions.

1 Talking about race makes me feel...

2 From my experience/perspective as (identity) ...

3 This perspective is new to me, but I'm wondering if it is accurate to say that...?

4 I'm still working through / processing this, but right now where I am at is...

5 Can you help me understand whether what I'm thinking right now might be problematic?

*Excerpt from Sensoy and DiAngelo. Adapted from Anika Nailah and DiAngelo.

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?	

Objectives

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?

Identity

SOCIAL — A group of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristic features or attributes

PERSONAL — Distinguishing characteristic(s) that a person takes special pride in or views as having social consequence

Identity also refers to social categories and sources of an individual's self-respect or dignity. Social identity is inextricably tied to the basis for one's self-respect and the respect one has for another.

Race is a Social Construct

- Race is a made-up system of classification, not a biological fact.
- Among other things, race was created to justify slavery, forced labor, and owning humans as property.
- There is no gene, trait, or characteristic that distinguishes racial groups.
- Race designations have changed over time.
- Just because race is socially constructed, that does not mean that it does not profoundly shape people's experiences.

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Multiple and Complex Identities

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).

These identities come with different levels of power and privilege.
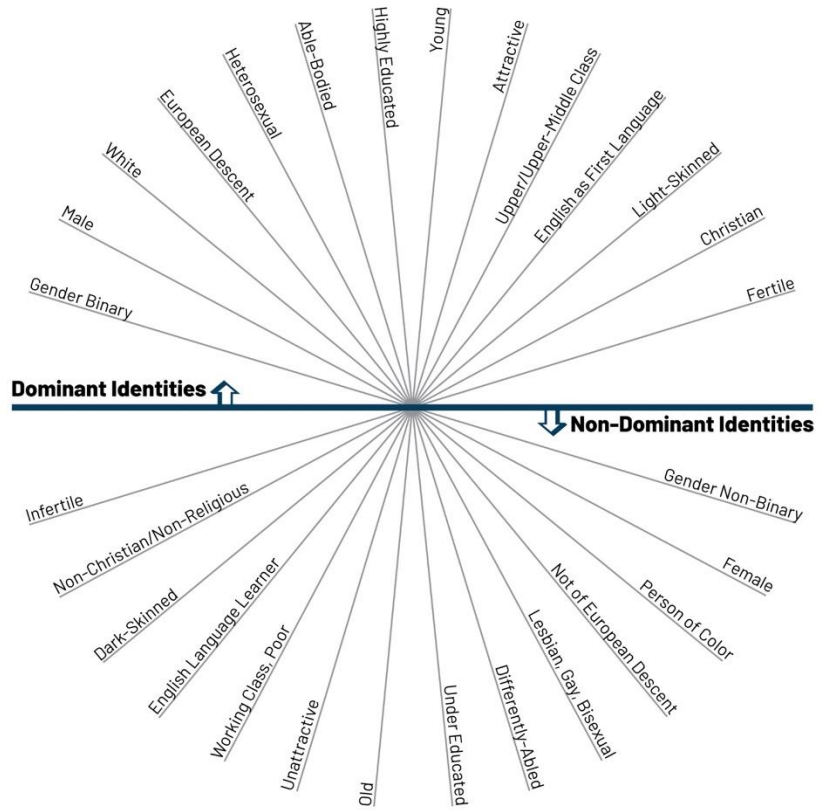
Adapted from Morgan, K.P. Describing the emperor's new clothes: Three myths of educational (in-) equity. In *The Gender Question in Education: Theory, Pedagogy, & Politics*. Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1996, 105–122.

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

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Explore your identity.

1. Which identity do you think about **most often?**
2. Which identity do you think about **least often?**
3. Which identity do you think **others notice about you first?**

Which identity do you think about **most often?** Why?	
Which identity do you think about **least often?** Why?	
Which identity do you think **others notice about you first?** Why?	

What examples can you think of in which your identity as a member of a dominant culture influences your own privilege?

What examples can you think of in which your identity as a member of a non-dominant culture influences your own internalized oppression?

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Breakout Groups

HERE'S WHAT TO EXPECT:

- ✓ A facilitator will be joining you. They'll lead you through a series of reflection questions about the identities you think about most often, least often, and which identity you think others notice about you first.
- ✓ You'll be in groups that have been randomly assigned.
- ✓ You'll be pulled back to the main session; unfortunately, it might be mid-sentence. We know this can feel weird.

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) manifest themselves.

Breakout Session 1b … Non-Dominant Culture and Oppression

Working with partner who shares a **non-dominant culture**, 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) manifest themselves.

Cultural Reference Points

INSTRUCTIONS

The following activity offers an opportunity both for self-reflection and for bridge-building. Consider doing this activity between different groups. 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 you 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 minimalize 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)
- Others

PRIMING, ASSOCIATIONS, ASSUMPTIONS

HISTORY, POLICIES, PRACTICES

For Example:
- Voting Rights
- FHA Loans
- Residential segregation
- Access to education, green space, resources, safety, healthcare, etc.
- Jobs, hiring and advancement

Implicit Bias

Structural Racism

INEQUITABLE OUTCOMES & RACIAL DISPARITIES

Dominant narratives about race (family, media, society) coupled with racialized structural arrangements and differential outcomes by race all prime us to believe that people of color are inferior to white people, create and maintain harmful associations, and lead us to make harmful assumptions, consciously and unconsciously, about people of color
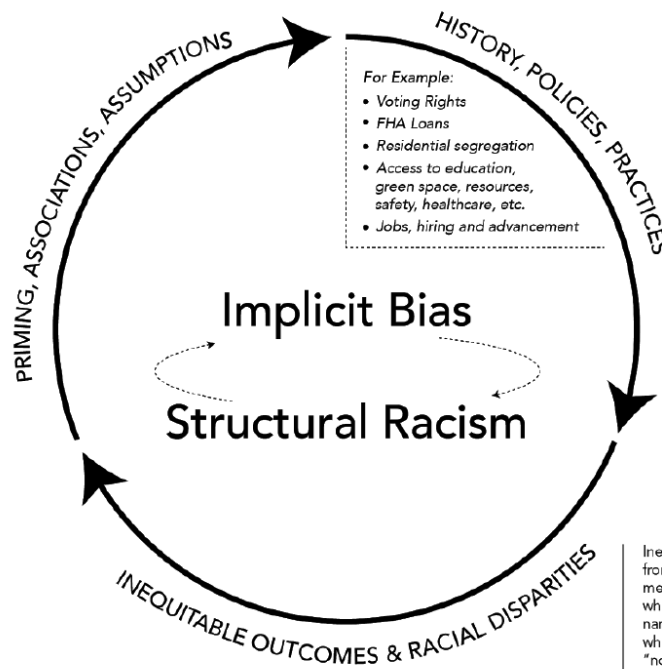
Race is created to justify enslaving people from Africa (economic engine of country)

Policies and practices that consolidate and protect power bestow unearned economic, social, cultural, and political advantage to people called "white," and unearned disadvantage to people of color

National narrative (ideology, belief system) about people of color being "less than" human (and less than white) justifies mistreatment and inequality (white supremacy)

Inequitable outcomes and experiences resulting from policy decisions in health, housing, employment, education, and life expectancy - reinforces white supremacist beliefs and ideology; dominant narrative uses disparate outcomes as evidence of white superiority, promotes whiteness as "normal" and desirable and justifies inequality

Cycle of Socialization

Why do we go along with what we are socially taught?
- We know what it feels like to be isolated.
- We are scared of what we don't know.

The Beginning
We are born into a world with mechanics in place: Bias, stereotypes, norms, histories, habits, and traditions.

First Socialization
- Taught on a personal level by family/peers/mentors we love and trust.
- Reinforced by group affiliations.

Institutional and Cultural Enforcements
- Messages you're surrounded by in media, schools, churches.
- Perception becomes normalized; you do not question the way things are.

Additional Enforcements
- Rewards and punishments, support and stigmas.
- You receive positive reinforcement when you act according to socialization.
- You receive negative messages when you question the status quo.

Results
- Internal feelings and social standing.
- "Abnormal", shame, silence, isolation, anger, stress, barriers to achieve.
- "Normal" confidence, security, autonomy, access to opportunities.

Options for Action
1. Continue back to "The Beginning" and continue to perpetuate biases, stereotypes, and norms.
2. Break the Cycle.

Source: Adapted from Bobbie Harro, 2004

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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.

Both influence how we categorize, treat, engage, and position people we interact with on a daily basis.

And both require self-awareness in order to move further along the journey of cultural competence.

Shared Understanding

1. Everyone has bias and unconscious bias.

2. We have unconscious bias because of the way our brains are wired.

3. Unconscious bias can have a positive or negative effect on students.

4. We are not aware of our unconscious biases, but we can become aware. It is our obligation to mitigate and address them.

Reflection Questions

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Bias

Our brain's automatic, unconscious categorizing can be extremely helpful, but it's also why we have biases.

Verna Myers Video

- 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?

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?

Commitments

|	
Commitments	The commitment I will make to be more aware of my identity in the next month:
Choice	I chose this next step in my learning because:
Action	The action I am planning to take because of this learning will be:
Results	I hope the results of this learning will be:

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.

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EQUITY
PROJECT
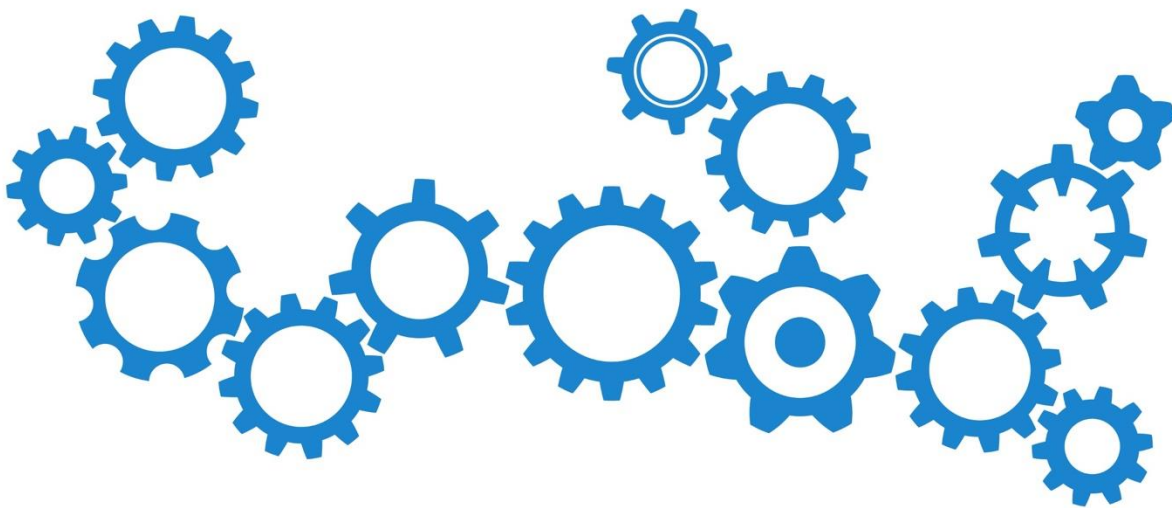
Effects of Oppression on the Learner's Brain

"Oppression is a social trauma … that impacts entire communities. … If these (traumatic) experiences … are not immediately followed by restorative experiences of finding safety and being acknowledged, these (automatic survival) reactions become stored in the body. Trauma stored in the body in this way shapes our perceptions and worldview in profound ways, … the world around us may seem inherently unsafe."

- Vanissar Tarakali in *Surviving Oppression, Healing Oppression*

Five Domains of Social Needs

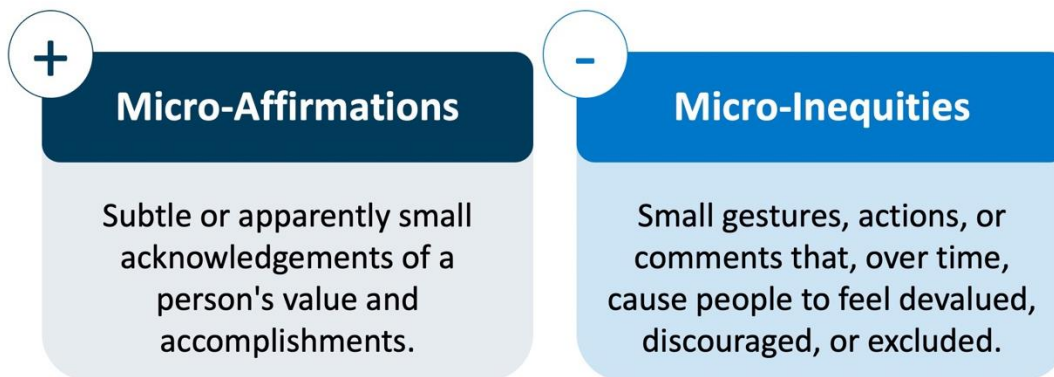| Element	Description
Status	A sense of importance or value relative to others; a person's perceived role in the "pecking order"
Certainty	An ability to predict what will happen next; a sense of consistency
Autonomy	A feeling of having control or influence over events or one's environment; having choices
Connection	The feeling of being safe and connected with others; being part of a "tribe" or community
Fairness	The perception that interactions between people are unbiased and appropriate based on shared standards; decisions are just

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EQUITY
PROJECT

Dena Simmons' TED Talk

How does Dena Simmons' experience connect to what we just learned about trauma?

Sometimes, it's the small things that create a ripple effect.

Micro-Messages
Small, sometimes unspoken, and unconscious messages that are sent and received many times a day.

+ **Micro-Affirmations**	– **Micro-Inequities**
Subtle or apparently small acknowledgements of a person's value and accomplishments.	Small gestures, actions, or comments that, over time, cause people to feel devalued, discouraged, or excluded.

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

What are some ways that you might better understand micro-messages you are sending?

Student Voices

In the Colorlines video, what impact did the teachers have on the educational and life experiences of the students featured?

Microaggressions

What are microaggressions?

Microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.

How does the language we use to talk about students' identities impact our stories, beliefs, and assumptions about students?

What assumptions come to mind when you hear:

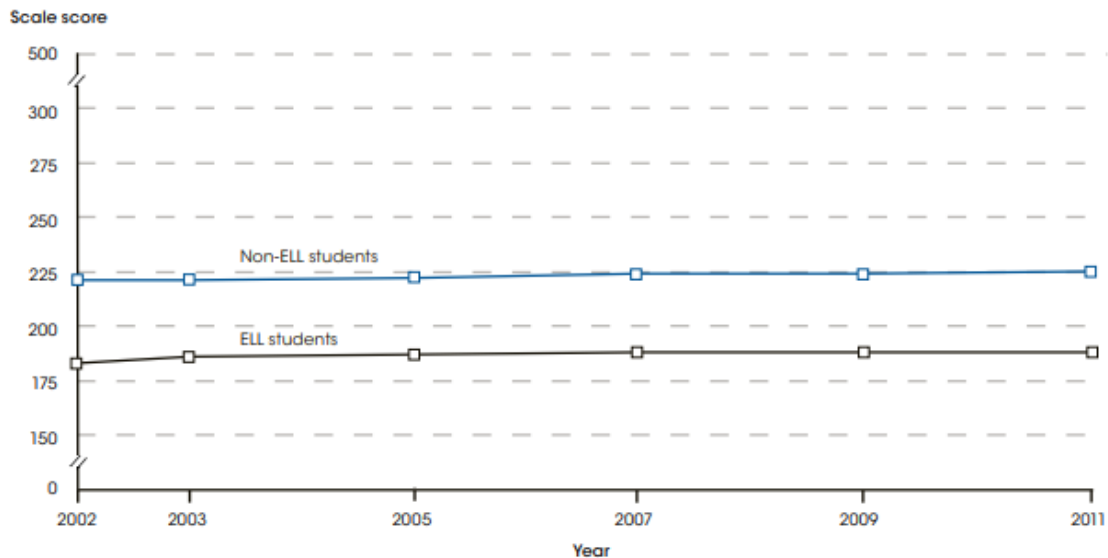| Learning Disability	vs	Learning Difference
English Learner	vs	Multilingual Learner
Autistic Child	vs	Child with Autism

How do your assumptions about students vary based on the terms used?
How might these terms impact the stories students tell themselves?
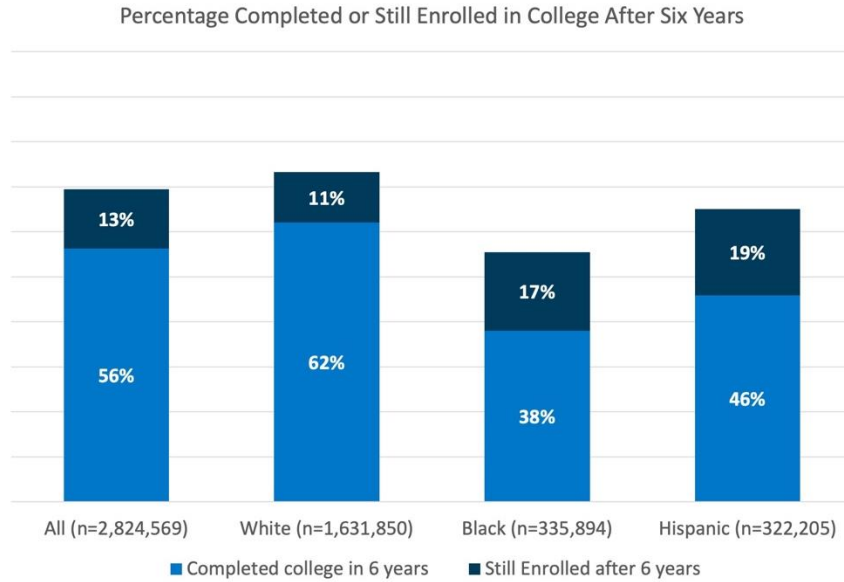
WHAT HEADLINE WOULD YOU WRITE FOR THE GRAPH BELOW?

Figure 2. Average reading scores of 4th-grade students, by English language learner (ELL) status: Selected years, 2002–11

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

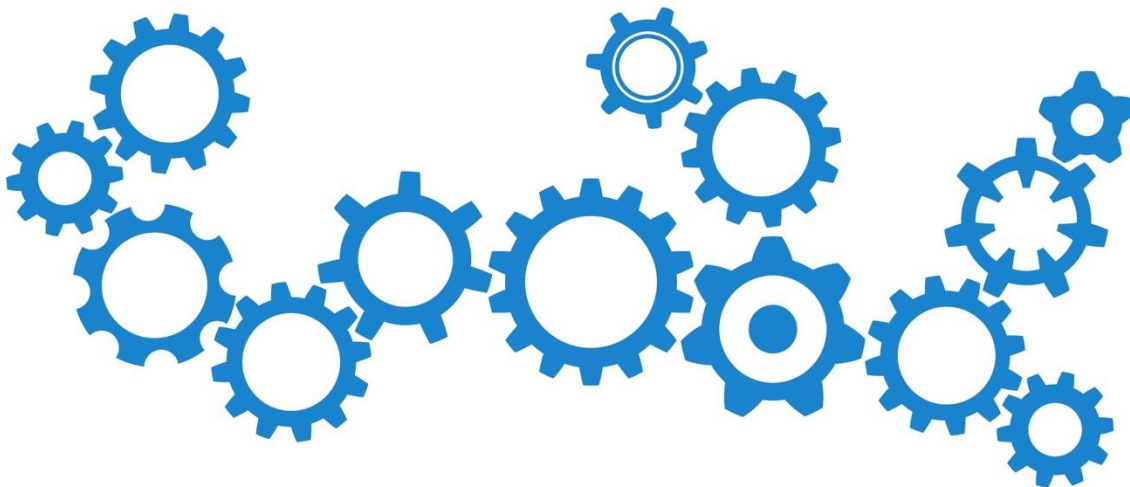What are some explanations you've heard to explain the data below?

Percentage Completed or Still Enrolled in College After Six Years

	All (n=2,824,569)	White (n=1,631,850)	Black (n=335,894)	Hispanic (n=322,205)
Still Enrolled after 6 years	13%	11%	17%	19%
Completed college in 6 years	56%	62%	38%	46%

Inside Higher Ed

■ Completed college in 6 years   ■ Still Enrolled after 6 years

Data Through the Lens of the Observer

Systems Level	Individual Level
Culture *(over policing)*	Climate *(she has a criminal background)*
Cause *(scarce job opportunities)*	Consequence *(people are poor)*
Institution *(staff diversification)*	Program *(institute PBIS)*

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

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