

## VTSS Equity Guiding Questions

- How does awareness, knowledge, and understanding of one's own racial and cultural identity influence effective teaching, leading, and learning?
- How does awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the racial and cultural identity of students and staff promote effective teaching, leading, and learning?
- How do we design systems and practices to establish learning environments that are conscious of race and culture to ensure implementation of culturally responsive practices, policies and procedures?



District Name:	Date:
DCA Administrator:	Facilitator:
Effective Innovation:	DIT Members:

**Directions:** The District Implementation Team completes the District Capacity Assessment (DCA) together by using the *DCA Scoring Guide* to discuss each item and come to consensus on the final score for each item. If the team is unable to arrive at consensus, additional data sources for each item are documented in the *DCA Scoring Guide* and should be used to help achieve consensus. Scores are recorded on this *Scoring Form* below and then entered into SISEP.org.

Item	Score		
1. There is a District Implementation Team (DIT) to support implementation of Effective Innovations (EI)	2	1	0
2. DIT includes someone with <b>executive leadership</b> authority	2	1	0
3. DIT includes an identified <b>coordinator</b> (or coordinators)	2	1	0
4. DIT uses an effective team meeting process	2	1	0
5. District outlines a formal procedure for selecting EIs through the use of <b>guidance documents</b>	2	1	0
6. District documents how current EIs link together	2	1	0
7. Funds are available to support the implementation of the EI	2	1	0
8. District has an <b>implementation plan</b> for the EI	2	1	0
9. DIT actively monitors the implementation of the plan	2	1	0
10. District utilizes a <b>communication plan</b>	2	1	0
11. District uses a process for addressing internal barriers	2	1	0
12. District uses a process to report <b>policy relevant information</b> to outside entities	2	1	0
13. DIT supports the use of a <b>fidelity</b> measure for implementation of the EI	2	1	0

14. DIT has access to data for the EI	2	1	0
15. DIT has a process for using data for decision making	2	1	0
16. District provides a status report on the EI to the school board	2	1	0
17. <b>Building Implementation Teams (BITs)</b> are developed and functioning to support implementation of EIs	2	1	0
18. BIT implementation plans are linked to district improvement plan	2	1	0
19. BITs have a process for using data for decision making	2	1	0
20. District uses a process for selecting staff (internal and/or external) who will implement and support the EI	2	1	0
21. Staff members selected to implement or support the EI have a plan to continuously strengthen skills	2	1	0
22. DIT secures training on the EI for all district/school personnel and stakeholders	2	1	0
23. DIT uses training effectiveness data	2	1	0
24. DIT uses a <b>coaching service delivery plan</b>	2	1	0
25. DIT uses coaching effectiveness data	2	1	0
26. Staff performance feedback is on-going	2	1	0

## Completed Equity Data Tables

### Students with Referrals:

	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian or Pacific Islander	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	White (not Hispanic Origin)	Multiracial	Total
<b># of students referred</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1,299</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>987</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>2,643</b>
<b># of students enrolled</b>	<b>27 .18%</b>	<b>324 2%</b>	<b>3,500 23%</b>	<b>1,299 8.6%</b>	<b>9,470 63%</b>	<b>404 2.7%</b>	<b>15,024</b>
<b>Risk</b>	<b>.26%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	
<b>Risk Ratio</b>	<b>1.48</b>	<b>0.56</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>1.06</b>	<b>0.35</b>	<b>1.07</b>	

### Students Not Proficient on SOLs

	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian or Pacific Islander	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	White (not Hispanic Origin)	Multiracial	Total
<b># of students not proficient</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1,053</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>1,105</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>2,633</b>
<b># of students enrolled</b>	<b>27 .18%</b>	<b>324 2%</b>	<b>3,500 23%</b>	<b>1,299 8.6%</b>	<b>9,470 63%</b>	<b>404 2.7%</b>	<b>15,024</b>
<b>Risk</b>	<b>0.23%</b>	<b>0.65%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	
<b>Risk Ratio</b>	<b>1.27</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>1.77</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>1.05</b>	

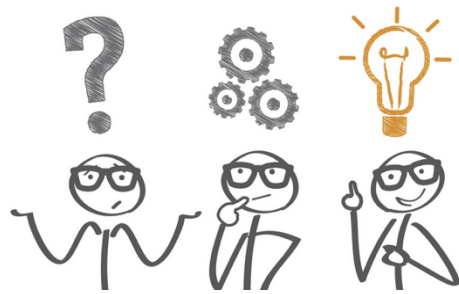
## Students Chronically Absent

	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian or Pacific Islander	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	White (not Hispanic Origin)	Multiracial	Total
# of students not proficient	4	9	643	303	867	52	1,826
# of students enrolled	27 .18%	324 2%	3,500 23%	1,299 8.6%	9,470 63%	404 2.7%	15,024
Risk	0.22%	0.49%	35%	16.6%	47.5%	2.8%	
Risk Ratio	1.22	0.22	1.78	2.1	0.53	1.06	

What do you notice?

What questions do you want to ask?

What other data would you like to have?



## Precision Problem Statement

Who? What? When? Where? Why?

<b>What systems/practices could be affecting the data/problem?</b>	<b>What additional data do you need? What do we need to tell the data story of black/Latinx students' experience within this division?</b>	<b>What are some action steps you might consider taking to address this problem?</b>



## Appendix H: Staff Elements of Culture Activity

**Participants:** Staff

**Purpose:** To engage staff in reflecting on their own values and culture, how they change over time, and how the school culture may engage or disengage students and families.

**Time:** 30-60 minutes

**Materials needed:** For each staff member, an Elements of Culture Table with various elements (see example on next page). The specific elements can be adjusted based on the needs of your school. For example, it may be useful to include a row for a common behavior issue in the school (e.g., volume, responding to insults).

**Steps:**

1. Provide each staff member with a table.
2. Alone or in groups, have staff complete each row. Ask them to think about the values they grew up with for each element, how those values might have changed as they have grown, what values the school models, what other values that students and families might hold, and how those differences might create conflict.
3. Allow time for discussion in small groups and sharing with the whole group. Some guiding questions include:
  - What differences are there among staff in values growing up (or now)?
  - How universal are these values? What dangers are there in assuming they are?
  - How have your values changed over time? Are changes in values good, bad, or neutral?
  - How is our "school culture" created, even if we don't explicitly try to make a school culture?
  - What happens when we assume school values are the "right values"?
  - How would students experience a school culture that is vastly different from culture at home?
  - To what extent can we prevent values conflicts from occurring?
4. Develop strategies to change the school culture to support student development and prevent conflict.



Element Of Culture	My Values Growing Up	My Values Now	What My School Values	How My Students/Families May Differ	How This Difference Can Create Conflict
<b>Language (Example)</b>	Formal and "respectful," especially from child to adult	Respect for all, but no need for formal language with adults	Formal and respectful from students to staff and between students	Less formal language and use of profanity to convey extreme emotion	Students/parents may be seen as aggressive and disrespectful when they have strong feelings
Space/ Proximity					
Attitude toward time					
Gender roles					
Family roles					
Family ties					
Grooming and presence					
Autonomy					
Status of age					
Education					

Created in partnership with Dr. Shelley Zion, Executive Director, Center for Advancing Practice, Education, and Research, University of Colorado Denver





# Unconscious BIAS



WHAT IS IT?

**FLAW**



instinctively CATEGORIZING PEOPLE and THINGS WITHOUT BEING AWARE OF IT

in thinking guided by past experiences and mental preconditioning

DID YOU KNOW?  
there are more than **150** types of biases

AND THEY **IMPACT** US, OUR WORK AND OUR RELATIONSHIPS

HOW TO DEAL WITH OUR BIASES?

1



**KNOW THEM WELL**



READ ABOUT THEM

RECOGNIZE THAT THEY EXIST



be mindful IN YOUR WORDS and ACTIONS

2



**THINK CRITICALLY**  
ATTEND TO DATA and EVIDENCES

LOOK AT PROBLEMS AS A DIAMOND WITH MULTIPLE FACETS



and not as a coin WITH ONLY TWO SIDES

3



**CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS AND TRADITIONS**

TAKE A CONTRARY VIEW

ask **WHY** AND WHY NOT? OFTEN

**EMBRACE DIVERSITY**

**PRACTICE EMPATHY**

INSIGHTS FROM A WORKSHOP WITH SMITA THAROOD  
TANMAY VORA QAspire.com

# Teacher Bias: The Elephant in the Classroom

Teacher Effectiveness August 27, 2018 The Graide Network

<https://www.thegraidenetwork.com/blog-all/2018/8/1/teacher-bias-the-elephant-in-the-classroom>



When discussing inequality in the classroom, it's tempting to focus on external factors like socioeconomic status or educational tools like rubrics; it's more uncomfortable to tackle a topic like teacher bias. After all, no one wants to think they are biased, particularly not people who devote their time, money, and energy to teaching the next generation.

However, even the most dedicated and well-meaning teacher holds stereotypes and beliefs that affect their students. Unfortunately, these beliefs can be as harmful as they are inevitable—at least when unexamined.

## The Stakes

Unconscious bias is particularly relevant to America today because of our education achievement gap.

As of 2008, 82.7% of Asian students and 78.4% of white students graduated high school on time, whereas the same was true for only 57.6% of Hispanic students, 57% of black students, and 53.9% of American Indian students. Similar disparities exist for essentially every other measure of educational achievement including standardized test scores, GPA, and suspension rates.

While some of the achievement gap is due to long-standing societal factors that go back to our country's inception, many studies show that another portion of this inequality is perpetuated in American classrooms today.

# The Evidence for Teacher Bias

In the 1960s, Harvard professor Robert Rosenthal performed an experiment to gauge how teachers' expectations affect student performance.

He told elementary school teachers that a test could determine which students' IQs were about to increase rapidly, randomly selected students to label with this potential growth, and tested the students' real IQs at the beginning of the year as well as at the end. The results? "If teachers had been led to expect greater gains in IQ, then increasingly, those kids gained more IQ," said Rosenthal.

This study is the basis for most of the following research on stereotypes in the classroom. The principle is the same—whether it's gender or race, student preference or handwriting, any factor that causes a teacher to have higher expectations for some of their students and lower expectations for others is bound to create results to match.

## Teacher Bias and Student Achievement

This might be surprising news—until you think about how much teachers affect their students. After all, if an educational authority with 20 years of experience acts as if a specific third grader doesn't show much promise, who are they to know differently?

Put more generally, teachers' belief in their students' academic skills and potential is "a vital ingredient for student success" because it is linked to students' beliefs about "how far they will progress in school, their attitudes toward school, and their academic achievement."

When teachers underestimate their students, it affects not just that one student-teacher relationship but the student's entire self-concept as well as more tangible measures like their GPA. In fact, the 2002 Education Longitudinal Study found that "Teacher expectations were more predictive of college success than most major factors, including student motivation and student effort."

Examining unconscious bias is imperative to improving educational outcomes, particularly for low-income students, minorities, and women in STEM, but the only way to do that is to first understand what biases exist for most teachers.

## Gender Bias in the Classroom

The effects of gender bias in the classroom are complicated, and research suggests that these biases have disadvantages for both boys and girls in different ways.

### *Discrimination Against Boys in School*

For boys, many of the challenges have to do with behavior and self-regulation. For example, according to the authors of *Reaching Boys, Teaching Boys*, boys are expelled from preschool almost five times more than girls, boys are more likely to drop out of school and less likely to do homework, and boys make up an increasingly low number

of college graduates. The authors conclude that, since boys often receive lower grades than their test scores would predict, behavior-heavy grading practices penalize boys, particularly in the younger grades.

According to a survey of 2,500 teachers, lessons that require motor activity or competition can encourage boys to succeed in the classroom and help teachers stop discriminating against boys in school.

### *Discrimination Against Girls in School*

That being said, some of that same attention to boys' behavior can harm girls as well; studies have shown that teachers often reward girls for being quiet rather than prompting them to seek deeper answers.

Educational research also reveals that teachers are more likely to interrupt girls, less likely to call girls to the front of the class to demonstrate, and less likely to direct their gaze toward girls while answering open-ended questions.

As is true with most kinds of biases, teachers are often completely unaware that they are treating their male and female students differently; these actions only become clear when teachers view videotapes of their classroom interactions.

Unfortunately, the inequality doesn't stop once the students leave the classroom at the end of the day.

### *Grading with Teacher Bias*

An education study done in Israel showed that gender bias also affects how teachers grade their students.

In the experiment, the researchers had classroom teachers, as well as external teachers, grade the same set of math tests completed by both girls and boys; they found that classroom teachers systematically gave their female students lower grades than the external teachers did. The only difference between the classroom teachers and the external teachers was that the external teachers graded blindly with respect to gender.

What's even more striking is that the same girls who were scored unfairly in sixth grade ended up pursuing fewer high-level STEM courses in high school.

As one commentator on the study pointed out, most of the teachers involved in the study were female, so "it's hard to imagine that these teachers actually have conscious animosity toward the girls in their classroom." It's an unconscious bias that caused them to treat their female students unfairly when it came to math and science—perhaps the same way their own teachers treated them.

# Racial Bias in the Classroom

As much as teachers are influenced by societal beliefs about gender, racial bias in education is arguably an even greater problem in the average American classroom.

A 2014 report showed that black children make up only 18% of preschoolers but make up 48% of children suspended more than once. The reasons for this disturbing disparity were explored by a recent study in which researchers read teachers vignettes about students of different genders and races with behavioral problems.

They discovered that teachers “increased the severity of suggested disciplinary actions when the race of the teachers didn’t match that of the child.” This insight is particularly important given that the National Center for Education Statistics found in 2010 that students of color make up over 45% of public school students whereas 83% of their teachers are white, and this gap is only projected to grow in coming years.

Unfortunately, this racial bias in education doesn’t stop at discipline. Students of color are significantly more likely to be concentrated in low-income schools with less qualified teachers, fewer material resources, larger classes sizes, and lower long-term expectations for their students. If a student of color does end up in a high-achieving school, they will be less likely to be placed in classes that will prepare them for college; “even when grades and test scores are comparable, black students are more likely to be assigned to lower-track, nonacademic classes.”

In addition, no matter what kind of class these students end up taking, teachers still tend to grade students different than them more harshly. This effect is not limited to students of color born in the United States.

For example, a 2018 study found that pre-service teachers “graded the performance of a student who appeared to have a migrant background statistically significantly worse than that of a student without a migrant background.”

Although issues of inequality in the classroom are complicated, unconscious bias is particularly important to study; without evidence that teachers are grading some students more harshly than others, it is easy to pin achievement differences on the students or on purely external factors that seem too difficult to solve.

# Implicit Bias in the Classroom

In addition to more systemic biases regarding gender and race, many teachers also hold implicit biases about individual students that should not—but do—affect grading. For example, a 2013 study done by the Department of Education tried to determine whether a teacher’s general feelings about a student affected their essay score.

After externally trained moderators looked at thousands of student essays and the scores they received from their teachers, almost two-thirds of the moderators believed that “teachers’ personal feelings about particular pupils influenced their assessments...

on a regular basis.” Aside from affinity, factors such as neat handwriting and lengthy essays also artificially inflated the students’ scores.

The so-called “teacher’s pet effect” can also overlap with the psychological phenomenon called the halo effect. Researchers have found that prior experiences with a student can bias teachers about current assignments.

When graders were exposed to a student’s oral presentation before receiving their written essay, “the graders assigned significantly higher scores to written work following the better oral presentation than following the poor oral presentation.”

This finding is important because it goes against the entire aim of education—to grow intellectually across the days and years. If teachers have an implicit bias to give lower grades to those students who previously got lower grades, the students might indeed be improving without the feedback to show it.

## Eliminating Teacher Bias

To address the various kinds of biases that exist in the classroom, many researchers have called for more anonymity in the grading process. In some ways, this is easier said than done.

Teachers could ask their students to write their names on the back of their papers rather than at the top or have students turn their papers in electronically with student ID numbers rather than names. However, these methods involve complete student compliance, which is difficult to achieve and may add time to the grading process, which already overburdens most teachers.

There are many other ways to decrease teacher bias in the classroom—from the hiring process all the way to lesson plans.

### *Staff Diversity*

One way to decrease bias, particularly racial bias, is to prioritize diversity in the hiring process. Many of the aforementioned studies on race showed that white teachers were more likely to discipline non-white students; hiring teachers that better reflect the diversity of the student body can begin to mitigate that problem.

### *Bias Identification*

After hiring diverse teachers, it’s important not to ask them to suppress biases or pretend to be color-blind; as Stanford’s Center for Education Policy Analysis explains, this is likely to be counterproductive and might even exacerbate existing biases.

It is, however, important to have teachers identify specific biases, perhaps through taking an Implicit Association Test (IAT), and then reduce shame levels by acknowledging that we all have biases.

## *Development Programs*

Specific professional development programs have also been shown to decrease prejudice. One online intervention encouraging empathy-centered discipline ended up cutting suspension rates in half, an important success given the disproportionate rates of suspension for black students.

In other studies, short mindfulness and loving-kindness meditations reduced implicit biases toward people of color among white participants.

## *Teacher Reflection*

On a more individual level, teachers can also reflect on and change their practices to reduce their own biases in the classroom.

For example, after a few months of school, the Educational Development team at Plymouth University suggests that teachers take a few minutes to “reflect on the distribution of students who are selected to be representatives or who participate most in the class.” Asking yourself whether the distributions are equal (and if not, why not) can be a starting place for more equality in the classroom.

## *Assessment Processes*

Teachers should also reflect on how they approach the assessment process. Jensen Learning advises asking yourself, “Do you begin with strengths and interests, then use those as starting points? Or, do you focus first on the deficits?” Deficit-focused teachers who have low expectations for certain students (or all their students) are more likely to have students with low expectations for themselves.

## *Student Culture & Background*

It may also be helpful to reflect on certain societal and cultural assumptions. For example, wholeheartedly believing in a meritocracy can “make teachers treat students who don’t succeed as if their failures are purely the result of lack of hard work and ability” rather than a complicated combination of internal and external factors.

In addition, being mindful of students’ different backgrounds can avoid unnecessary conflict. For instance, a student may resist looking a teacher in the eye while speaking because some cultures interpret direct eye contact as a lack of respect; on the other hand, some Eurocentric teachers might think that same lack of eye contact indicates disrespect or shyness. Not all students will have the same cultural assumptions as their teachers, and it is our responsibility, not theirs, to bridge the gap.

## *Student Involvement*

After reflecting, teachers can consider sharing some of this information with their students. After all, it is not only teachers who struggle with biases but everyone; encouraging students to examine themselves and the world around them can prepare them for being self-aware and fair citizens.

Some possibilities for lessons include integrating TED talks on unconscious bias, assigning projects on gendered marketing, and reading books that explicitly tackle issues of race, gender, and class. Although unconscious bias may be inevitable, negatively impacting your students is not.

Being aware of the major types of bias that exist, participating in professional development programs that emphasize diversity, reflecting on the fairness of your own teaching practices are simple but important ways to help close the achievement gap. Let's make sure that our students are being taught equally and assessed fairly on the assignments that they can control, rather than the things about them that they can't.



**Black and Latinx students are significantly more likely to fall into each of the target groups.**

	How might this bias be affecting specific practices or systems within our division and contributing to our problem?	What are some action steps we might take to address this bias within our practices/systems?
<b>Color Blindness</b>		
<b>Deficit Thinking</b>		
<b>Poverty Disciplining</b>		

**3. Evidence Based Practices: Teaching and learning approaches proven to be effective through scientifically based studies.**

<p><b>Feature</b></p> <p><b>3.C Continuum of Supports that is Culturally Responsive</b></p>	<p>Phase of Implementation (check one)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration: The DLT maps the current reality of existing practices and programs and reviews them for evidence of effectiveness. The DLT explores cultural and linguistic factors when adopting academic/social behavioral practices, programs, and assessments</li> <li>• Installation: Upon completion of the review, the DLT seeks stakeholder input, investigates practices for which needs are identified, and makes purchases and/or withdraws programs as appropriate. The DLT and SLT use a selection tool, which prompts analysis for cultural context.</li> <li>• Initial Implementation: The DLT maintains an inventory of EBPs and materials in a continuum of supports. A clearly defined continuum of supports is maintained in tier definition or separate document</li> <li>• Full Implementation: All instructional staff and stakeholders are aware of and able to utilize the continuum of supports for the purpose of providing an appropriate instructional match to meet the needs of all learners</li> </ul>	<p><b>Who is responsible?</b></p>	<p><b>By when?</b></p>	<p><b>Notes/Comments</b></p>	<p><b>Evaluation Measure/Evidence</b></p>
					<p>DCA 6: Division documents how current innovations/practices link together AND how they are compatible and add value to one another to achieve improved outcomes for ALL students</p>
					<p>DCA 7: Funds are available to support the implementation</p>
					<p>DCA 13: Division supports the use of fidelity measures when implementing practices.</p>
					<p>Buildings are able to score a 2 or 3 on TFI items: 1.6, 1.10, 1.11, 2.5, 3</p>
					<p>Buildings are able to fully implement TFI-AE 1.3, 2.1, 2.4, 2.5, 3.1</p>
					<p>Other:</p>



Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports  
Division Implementation Plan Template

**3. Evidence Based Practices: Teaching and learning approaches proven to be effective through scientifically based studies.**

<p><b>Feature</b></p> <p><b>3.E Capacity for Coaching and Professional Learning (Ensuring staff capacity for cultural and linguistic responsiveness within the division context)</b></p>	<p>Phase of Implementation (check one)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration: The DLT plans training for commitment and utilization of practices, programs, and assessments that are culturally and linguistically responsive and used across all schools in all curricula.</li> <li>• Installation: The DLT ensures staff can articulate information and factors to consider when utilizing culturally and linguistically relevant practices, programs, and assessments.</li> <li>• Initial Implementation: The DLT supports staff in implementation with fidelity of culturally and linguistically responsive practices, programs, and assessments at all three tiers.</li> <li>• Full Implementation: The DLT assists all staff in the analysis of outcomes in order to make instructional decisions that meet the cultural and linguistic context of the division.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action Items (include needed resources)</b></p>	<p><b>Who is responsible?</b></p>	<p><b>By when?</b></p>	<p><b>Notes/Comments</b></p>	<p><b>Evaluation Measure/Evidence</b></p>
						<p>DCA 21: Division has an ongoing plan to strengthen staff skills</p> <p>DCA 22: DIT secures training on VTSS for all division/school personnel and stakeholders</p> <p>Buildings are able to score a 2 on TFI items: 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.13, 1.14, 1.15</p> <p>Buildings are able to fully implement TFI-AE: 1.3, 1.4B, 1.7A, 1.7B, 2.1, 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 3.7</p> <p>Other:</p>

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