

ADDRESSING INCIDENTS OF BIAS IN SCHOOLS

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A Guide for Preventing and Reacting
to Discrimination Affecting Students



**Addressing Incidents of Bias in
Schools: A Guide for Preventing
and Reacting to Discrimination
Affecting Students**

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For the full range of Everyday Democracy
tools and resources, see
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INTRODUCTION

Bias, discrimination and hate crimes are increasing... But you can do something!

Many people are concerned about the recent rise in discrimination and hate crimes taking place across the nation. Perhaps most troubling is that the majority of these incidents are occurring in elementary, middle and high schools.¹

Too often, we don't talk about incidents of bias, discrimination and hate crimes in our schools because we are afraid that these discussions will be uncomfortable, upsetting, time-intensive or overly political. But school is exactly the place where this conversation needs to start. The people in our school communities—including teachers, parents, staff and students—have the capacity to deal with past incidents and prevent them from happening in the future.² Addressing bias and discrimination is critical to the safety and education of our young people.

Defining terms

In plain terms, *bias* is an unfair judgment about a person or group of people, and *discrimination* is the denial of justice and fair treatment by individuals and institutions. Hate crimes (also known as bias crimes) include offenses like graffiti, online harassment, or physical violence aimed at people on the basis of their race, religion or immigration status.

Why use this guide?

This guide is designed to bring together a school community in order to address and prevent incidents of bias, discrimination and hate crimes. It includes suggestions for facilitating the discussions so that they are safe, illuminating and productive, as well as for organizing the process so that it fits in the daily rhythm of the school community. As you continue on, you will find instructions for how to use the guide, questions to consider ahead of time and a series of four sessions for small-group discussion. The sessions are designed to help people understand the problem, consider different ways of making a difference and plan how they might take action.

¹ ProPublica, "Documenting Hate." ; Southern Poverty Law Center, "Update: 1,094 Bias-Related Incidents in the Month Following the Election."

² Walsh, "Talking about race: Community dialogues and the politics of disagreement."; Wulff, "Helping every student succeed: Schools and communities working together."

Bringing together your school community for these conversations can result in:

- Increased trust, understanding, and communication between people, so that attitudes and behaviors are changed and people treat one another better.³
- Greater learning about these issues, so that people are more likely to step forward to prevent incidents in the future.⁴
- An opportunity to plan action steps—new programs, initiatives, policy changes—and build the volunteer base and community support for making them happen.⁵

Why are these conversations important?

Engaging your school community can help build the social cohesion and connectedness that not only helps prevent incidents and makes kids feel safer, but also allows them to focus more on learning.⁶ When students learn more, they are more likely to succeed academically and are more prepared for life after graduation.⁷ In that sense, addressing and preventing incidents is not just a short-term reaction but a long-term strategy for the well-being of our students and our communities.

It is important to point out that bias, discrimination and hate crimes are by no means a new or isolated phenomenon. Bias, racism, sexism, homophobia and many other forms of prejudice have always existed in our national history. And so we must acknowledge that biased, discriminatory and hateful crimes and incidents in schools are part of a very large web of interconnected issues. However, in this guide we have chosen not to attempt to tackle this vast web of issues all at once, but rather to focus on how we can address bias, discrimination and hate crimes in schools.

As you engage in these conversations, choosing words carefully is important for creating a productive and safe environment. A list of key terms and definitions and a description of "person-centered language," can be found on page 19. Something as simple as choosing one word over another can have a big impact on how your message is received by others.

³Walsh, "Talking about race: Community dialogues and the politics of disagreement."; Orland, *Teachers, study circles and the racial achievement gap: How one dialogue and action program helped teachers integrate the competencies of an effective multicultural educator*; Fagotto & Fung, *Sustaining public engagement: Embedded deliberation in local communities*.

⁴ Ibid Walsh; Potapchuk, *Building capacity and cultivating interdependence for racial justice*.

⁵ Ibid Walsh; . Leighninger, *The next form of democracy: How expert rule is giving way to shared governance – and why politics will never be the same*.

⁶ Stixrud, *Why Stress Inhibits Learning*

⁷ Grad Nation Community Guidebook, *Demonstrating the Benefits of High School Completion*.

HOW TO USE THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE

Basics about the process:

- Four 60-minute sessions
- Designed for students, teachers, staff and parents
- Groups of 7-10 people who stay together for all sessions
- The more groups, the better

This guide is designed to be used by teachers, students, staff, principals, parents and other community members who want to address bias, discrimination and hate crimes in their school (but don't necessarily know how to start). It can be used in classrooms, faculty and staff meetings, after-school programs, meetings of parent groups, and other settings where people are coming together to address the problem, think about ways to make a difference, and come up with plans for the future.

Each school community will need to adapt these suggestions to suit its own unique strengths and conditions. Everyone involved will also need to figure out how they will be best able to support the process: not every teacher is willing or able to serve as a small-group facilitator; not every administrator feels ready to talk with parents about bias and discrimination; not every student will be able to recruit their peers to take part in these discussions. But every school community includes people with the temperament to be good facilitators, others with the organizational skill to set up the meetings and others who have the confidence to speak up about the importance of preventing incidents of bias, discrimination and hate crimes.

Maximizing your impact

One key fact about engagement is that the more participants you have, the more successful your efforts are likely to be. There are two reasons for this. First, these discussions can have an effect on the participants themselves, helping them form connections, learn from one another, change how they think, and change how they work together; the more people you have, the more these effects multiply. Second, when large, diverse numbers of people take part in the process, they are more likely to have an impact on public decisions and public problem-solving generally. Therefore, this guide will likely be more beneficial if it is used in a wide range of settings by a wide array of people.

Engaging large, diverse numbers of participants is especially important if there has been a recent high-profile incident of bias, discrimination or hate crime in the community. To deal with that kind of situation and to prevent similar incidents in the future, a wide array of people should come together so that the responsibility for moving forward is broadly shared.

While you need large numbers for large impact, the discussions themselves should be small. The discussion sessions in this guide are designed for groups of 7-10 people. This makes participants feel more comfortable and gives them greater opportunities for sharing, learning and action planning. For example, if there are 100 participants total, they should be split into roughly 10 groups.

Getting started: Planning how you will use the guide

To start planning how you might use this guide, the most straightforward steps are to:

- Convene a small, diverse group of 7-10 people, including educators, students, parents and other community members. Recruit people who you think would be thoughtful and helpful for moving the process forward.
- Pilot the guide with this group—go through the first two sessions at least, so that people can see how the process works.
- Ask the group: should we use this guide here, with a larger number of small groups, and if so, how should we go about organizing the process?
- Decide who will facilitate: educators, students or others?

Facilitating the sessions

The guide has four sessions:

Session 1: Comparing Notes on Our Experiences

Session 2: Why Are These Incidents Happening Now?

Session 3: What Should We Do to Prevent and Address These Incidents?

Session 4: What Next Steps Should We Take?

The facilitator is the individual that helps a group by guiding a discussion productively.

Each session is designed to be a 60-minute discussion, although they can be shortened, lengthened or divided to accommodate classroom settings. Seven to ten people is an ideal number for small group conversations. Ideally, the same group of people participates in each of the four sessions (rather than having new people join the group midway through). Depending on what is best for your local community, you can also extend participation to include school board members, local officials and other concerned community members.

These sessions are designed to be facilitated. The facilitator does not need to be an expert on the topic. In fact, the main requirement for the facilitator is to avoid giving his or her own opinions, and focus instead on the group. The facilitator should help the group set some ground rules, help manage the time, summarize key points, and make sure everyone has a chance to speak. Recruiting facilitators, helping them understand their role, and giving them a chance to practice facilitating can be extremely beneficial. For more on facilitation, see p. 8.

You can also ask someone to serve as a note taker for each discussion, to help the group remember what was accomplished in the prior session. This can be a role that is alternated among group members. For more on note-taking, see p. 9.

For more information on how to organize these sessions, facilitate small-group discussions, recruit participants and other engagement skills, see the **Participation Skills Module** (Nabatchi and Leighninger 2015) available free of charge at bit.ly/PPskills (direct download) or bit.ly/PP21CDresources.

Ahead of the sessions, it is also important to acknowledge the power dynamic of potentially having students, parents, teachers and administrators in the same room. For example, it is important that students feel comfortable sharing openly and honestly, and so it is important to mitigate any potential fear of 'getting in trouble' with authority figures. Ask everyone to be mindful of the power dynamics at play in these relationships – between students and adults, parents and teachers, or teachers and administrators – and ask everyone to help ensure that the ground rules and the discussion are working for all.

Ideally participants will be joining these conversations voluntarily, but if they have been required to attend (especially students), facilitators could make a statement like "I know not everyone has voluntarily chosen to be here, but my goal is to make our time together worth it for everyone, so that by the end of this session you are enthusiastic about joining future conversations."

Where and when should the sessions take place?

This guide is designed to be used in a wide variety of places and spaces. The 60-minute sessions can be held during a class, as part of an after-school program, in a parent-teacher meeting and in many other settings.

School buildings are the most obvious places where the sessions can be held, but if you are trying to recruit parents and other community members, consider other locations as well: community centers, libraries, places of worship and other places where people often gather. Wherever it is, the room should be well-lit, easy to find, easy to reach by public transportation and accessible to people with disabilities.⁸

When scheduling the sessions, think about what will be most convenient for the people you are trying to engage. If you want to involve a range of people—including people who are not students or educators—you may want to offer a range of choices, including different times of day and different days of the week. Alternatively, you can hold all of the sessions as part of a day-long event on a weekend day.

Finally, check with the needs of your community. What languages do community members speak? For a truly inclusive environment, provide services such as translation and childcare. Providing food during these conversations is a plus; just be mindful of dietary restrictions and allergies.

⁸ Campbell et al, *Organizing Community-wide Dialogue for Action and Change*.

Sharing ideas and supporting action efforts

Once all the groups have gone through the sessions in the guide, you can bring all the participants together for a forum at which they share the themes and ideas that emerged in their discussions. These events can be helpful for moving from discussion to action.

The agenda should have three elements:

- Presentations by the small groups about their areas of agreement and disagreement, and their ideas for moving forward.
- A process for prioritizing action ideas by giving people the chance to vote for the ones they like best.
- Creating action teams around the ideas with the most votes of support.

Give the teams a deadline to report back to the school community what they have accomplished, what they need and what they want to recommend.

Thinking about what's next

After these conversations finish, people are going to be asking "What's next?" That is why it is important to think about what comes next before the conversation even begins. Some things to consider include:

- Is your school willing and able to support, financially or otherwise, ongoing initiatives, programs or events?
- In what ways are you, the organizers, able and willing to support next steps out of these conversations?

TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FACILITATORS AND NOTE TAKERS

Potential goals for facilitators:

- Be impartial; the facilitator's opinions are not part of the discussion.
- Help the group set some guidelines or ground rules and keep to them.
- Help group members identify areas of agreement and disagreement.
- Use the discussion materials to bring in points of view that have not been talked about.
- Create opportunities for everyone to participate.
- Focus and help to clarify the discussion.
- Summarize key points in the discussion or ask others to do so.
- Be self-aware; good facilitators know their own strengths, weaknesses, biases and values.
- Put the group first.

A facilitator can help focus and structure the discussion and, at the same time, encourage the participants to take ownership of their group. The facilitator can create a safe environment where each participant feels comfortable expressing ideas and responding to those of others.

The facilitator is not there to "teach," but instead, is there to guide the process. They do not have to be an expert in the subject being discussed.

Here are some other tips to keep in mind:

Be prepared. Make sure you are familiar with the discussion materials, and think ahead of time about the directions in which the discussion might go.

Set a relaxed and open tone. Welcome everyone and create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Try to involve everyone by making eye contact, smiling, and using names when talking to people. Use person-centered language to create an inclusive atmosphere. For more on person-centered language, see page 19.

Help the group establish some ground rules. At the beginning of the session, ask people to suggest how the group should function. Use the sample ground rules and invite the group to add others or delete/modify some of the ones that are already there. The point is for the group to feel that the rules are their own.

Monitor and assist the group process. Keep track of how the group members are participating—who has and hasn't spoken. Don't let anyone dominate; try to involve everyone. For example, if one person has dominated the conversation, pause the conversation and say that you notice not everyone has had a chance to talk yet, but you want to hear what others are thinking. You can also use a "parking lot" (see next page) as a tool to keep conversations on topic.

Allow time for pauses and silence. People need time to reflect and respond. Avoid speaking after each comment or answering every question and allow participants to respond directly to each other. When deciding whether to intervene, lean toward not intervening in the discussion.

Creating a Parking Lot. A parking lot is an effective tool for facilitators to use to keep meetings on track. Sometimes participants will contribute something that isn't related to the meeting's agenda. To ensure the participant feels heard while staying on target, facilitators can create a 'parking lot,' or a place to bench those ideas until the end of the discussion. At the beginning of the meeting, facilitators can write 'Parking Lot' on a large piece of paper or poster board at the front of the room.

To use the parking lot most effectively:

1. Explain the concept of a parking lot at the beginning of the meeting.
2. When contributions are made by participants that are off topic, write them up in the "parking lot."
3. If there is time at the end of the conversation, return to items in the "parking lot" to see if they can be discussed.

Tips for note takers

Taking notes on the discussion has several benefits: it lets people know they have been heard and that their ideas have been recognized, it provides a 'transcript' of the meeting to help with future discussions and decisions, and it helps keep participants on track with the agenda. However, it is important that the participants in the group have a chance to talk about what is being recorded and how the notes are going to be used. Especially when discussing a sensitive issue like bias and discrimination, people need to feel comfortable with how their words might be used after the session is over. (One of the suggested ground rules in the first session focuses on the note-taking.)

Note taking can be done on flip charts or butcher paper in front of the group, on a laptop or tablet, or through audio taping and other technologies. When recording is done visibly, for example on flip charts or butcher paper, people can see what has happened and are more likely to submit ideas. But this kind of visible recording is usually more helpful in the middle sessions or in the last session, when people are talking about actions they might take. In the first session it can be intrusive, since at that point participants are sharing experiences and getting to know each other better.

Session 1

COMPARING NOTES ON OUR EXPERIENCES

Goals for the session:

- Begin to build relationships.
- Talk about what has been happening and why it is important.

Tips for facilitators:

- Welcome everyone, explain your role and describe the goals of the session.
- Divide the session into three parts. Use the amount of time suggested for each as a guide.
- Ask participants to respond to the questions.
- Don't feel like you have to cover every question.

PART A

Setting the ground rules (10 minutes)

1. First, it may be helpful to set some ground rules for these discussions. Here are some guidelines that have worked well for other groups:

- Listen with respect.
- Each person gets a chance to talk.
- One person talks at a time. Don't cut people off.
- Speak for yourself, and not as the representative of any group.
- If you are bothered by something that was said, say so, and say why.
- It's okay to disagree, but personal attacks are not allowed.
- Help the facilitator keep things on track.
- Unless the group decides otherwise, what is said in the session is to be kept confidential.
- The notes being taken for the session will not include direct quotes and the participants will have a chance to review the notes before they are shared outside the group.

2. Are you comfortable with these ground rules? Are there any you would delete or others you want to add?

It is a good idea to review your guidelines quickly at the beginning of each session.

PART B

Introductions and experiences (45 minutes)

3. Introduce and describe yourself to the group. You could talk about any or all of these things:

- Your background/story
- Where you were born
- Your religion
- Your race or ethnicity

Facilitator's note

The way you introduce yourself will set the tone for how others in the group participate as well. If you are open, others will tend to be as well. However, topics such as race and religion can be sensitive to talk about. It may help to start the introduction

with a statement such as "I know some of the things we discuss today might be difficult to talk about, and if you ever feel uncomfortable sharing, you can always say 'pass' and we will move on to the next person in the circle."

4. Have you experienced bias, discrimination or a hate crime? (This could be a situation where you were being discriminated against, one where you saw someone else being discriminated against, or one where a whole group was being targeted.) Please refer to the key terms on page 19 for the definition of discrimination, as well as other helpful terms.

- What happened?
- What did you think about it?
- How did it affect people afterward?

5. What do you hope will happen as a result of these discussions?

PART C

Getting ready for next time (5 minutes)

Facilitators: Review the details (when, where, how long) for the next session.

Participants: Before the next session, read Session 2 in the guide. If you want, do some extra research on explanations for bias, discrimination and/or hate crimes.

Session 2

WHY ARE THESE INCIDENTS HAPPENING NOW?

Goals for the session:

- Gain a better understanding of the possible reasons why incidents of bias, discrimination and/or hate crimes are happening.
- Try to understand views that are different from our own.

To understand how we might deal with bias, discrimination and hate crimes, it may be helpful to explore the reasons we think they are happening. This will help sharpen our thinking about how we might deal with them and prevent them from happening in the future.

Tips for facilitators:

- Review the ground rules set in the first session.
- Recap the conversation from the previous session.
- Describe the goals of the session.
- Divide the session into two parts. Use the amount of time suggested for each as a guide.
- Give people a few minutes to read the views, then ask the questions about the views.

PART A

Potential explanations for the rise in bias and hate crimes (50 minutes)

Each of the views below is in the voice of a person who thinks it is a very important idea. You may find yourself agreeing or disagreeing with these views, and that is totally okay. We are talking about them not because we think they are the “right” way to be thinking about things, but because we want to explore our own opinions and reactions to them, and why we feel the way we do.

Begin by reading the viewpoints as a group. This can be done silently and individually or by asking people to take turns reading each view aloud. Then use the “Questions about the views,” which get people talking about which views they like—and whether there are other views that are missing.

View 1 – The current political climate encourages intolerance.

According to this view: Our politics have become increasingly nasty and cruel. On the one hand, some say the current administration is advancing racism and “rolling the clock back” on progress, causing some people to feel that it is okay to make racist or anti-immigrant statements or commit hate crimes. However, supporters of the administration feel ostracized and misunderstood, arguing that they can’t have a conversation to explain their viewpoint without being shouted down by “the other side.” And the many in the middle are unable to contribute to the conversation because of the strong opinions on both sides. Political intolerance across the board is what has made folks get so angry at one another, instead of working through their differences with respect.

View 2 – Safety standards at schools have become too relaxed.

According to this view: Schools have become increasingly less safe. Parents, teachers and other adults now tolerate behavior that would have been considered unacceptable a generation ago. Because we have less discipline at school, it is easier than ever to commit all kinds of crimes and offenses, including ones motivated by hatred against particular groups.

View 3 – Economic conditions are pitting people against one another.

According to this view: The real underlying problems are economic ones. Lots of people are in a bad way financially; they feel increasingly anxious about where their next paycheck is coming from or whether they will end up with lots of student debt and no job. They worry that their job might be taken by a recent immigrant or by a person of color through affirmative action. The gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" is wider than ever. People feel like the economy is unfair, and that makes them lash out at one another.

View 4 – Incidents are being overhyped by the media.

According to this view: The whole situation has become overblown. Every racist incident or hate crime is seized on by the media and by public figures, who use these events to make money or to get attention. Bullying has always been a problem in schools; the election has just caused people to view examples of bullying in a new way. All the coverage and discussion of these incidents may even make them more likely, because troubled people realize they can cause a stir by making discriminatory statements or committing racist acts.

View 5 – These incidents are merely a visible sign of less visible, ongoing systems of oppression.

According to this view: According to this view: These incidents are just the symptoms of a larger, long-term problem: racism, bias and bigotry are widespread in our society and our systems. The deck is stacked against people of color, recent immigrants, and other people who are identified as "minorities" because of their skin color, their accents or the religious garments they wear. Your life outcomes – whether you can get a good job, get into an advanced class in school, buy a house, or avoid being prosecuted and jailed – are deeply affected by your background and identity.

View 6 – Technology makes it easier for people to spread hatred anonymously.

According to this view: People have always had hateful thoughts about people of other backgrounds, but they usually don't feel comfortable saying these things out loud. Smartphones and social media have made it easy for people to spread hatred while remaining anonymous. There are often no consequences for anti-immigrant, racist, bullying behavior online.

View 7 – Is there a view that was not included that you would like to suggest?

Questions about the views:

- Which views come closest to your own?
- What do you think is important about each view?
- Do you disagree with any viewpoints, and if so, why? Why would a person support this view?
- What other viewpoints might be out there that we don't see here?

PART B

Getting ready for next time (5 minutes)

Facilitators: Review the details (when, where, how long) for the next session.

Participants: Before the next session, read Session 3 in the guide. If you want, do some additional research on approaches to preventing incidents of bias, discrimination and hate crimes.

Session 3

WHAT SHOULD WE DO TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS THESE INCIDENTS?

Goals for the session:

- Discuss different ways to move forward.
- Explore pros and cons of different approaches.

Tips for facilitators:

- Review the ground rules set in the first session.
- Recap the conversation from the previous sessions.
- Describe the goals of the session.
- Divide the session into two parts. Use the amount of time suggested for each as a guide.
- Give people a few minutes to read the approaches, then ask the questions about the approaches.

PART A

Possible approaches for moving forward (50 minutes)

Each of the approaches below is written in the voice of a person who thinks it is a very important idea. You may find yourself agreeing or disagreeing with these approaches, and that is totally okay. We are talking about them not because we think any one of them is necessarily the “right” thing to do, but because we want to explore different ways to move forward, and the pros and cons of different approaches.

Begin by reading the approaches as a group. This can be done silently and individually, or by asking people to take turns reading each one aloud. Then use the “Questions about the approaches,” which get people talking about which approaches they like—and whether there are others that are worth considering.

Approach 1 – Organize dialogue across differences

Hatred between groups is rooted in a lack of understanding and empathy. All too often, we connect only with people who already share our views. By staying in our own networks, we don’t get the opportunity to reach across differences and engage in dialogue with people from other backgrounds. Dialogues are a central way to realize that differences of opinion, experiences, and backgrounds are interesting and important to understand.

Approach 2 – Step up safety efforts and show zero tolerance to offenders

Many schools began adopting zero tolerance policies as a way to prevent tragic school shootings such as the Columbine High School Massacre in 1999. By showing zero tolerance to a student when they bring a weapon to school or threaten the safety of their fellow classmates, it shows that the school is committed to keeping students safe and sends a strong message to all students that weapons and violence are not acceptable at school. It is important to step up safety efforts to keep our students safe and to create an inclusive environment for learning.

Approach 3 – Address deeper issues of economic and educational inequities

It is essential for schools to address both economic and educational inequities. A student’s ability to succeed in the classroom is influenced by many factors, including where they live, what’s happening in their home life, access to daycare, early childhood experiences, experiences with after-school care, and their ability to access other resources.⁹ Schools and teachers should ensure that they are addressing these inequities in their policies, curriculum, teaching styles, and even in their verbal and nonverbal communication with students.

Approach 4 – Teach inclusion

As the country becomes more diverse and bias-related incidents increase, educators are increasingly challenged with ways to address this complex environment. Teachers across the country are integrating issues of race, discrimination, and inclusion into their classrooms and curricula. In that way, they are helping to create a safe space for students to discuss these complex and emotional subjects.

Approach 5 – Organize school-wide events that bring everyone together

Simply forming relationships between people of different backgrounds is the first step toward reducing bias, discrimination and hate crimes. Because lunch is often the time of the school day when students are most divided by race, gender and socioeconomic status, some schools are using this situation as an opportunity to unite.¹⁰ Students across the country are organizing lunchtime events that allow them to reach across barriers, foster a sense of community and connect with each other.

Approach 6 – Create a school-community-law enforcement partnership

Preventing crime is a matter of teamwork. All schools have a relationship with law enforcement, but from community to community and school to school, this relationship varies. Police are contacted when there is an incident, and in some cases, police officers are stationed in schools. Some schools and police departments are improving teamwork by creating partnerships to address hate crimes, working with parents, the business community, the faith-based community and other groups. In these partnerships, the groups develop a shared vision and goals for preventing and addressing crime.

Questions about the approaches:

- Which approach seems most important to you?
- What do you think is important about each approach?
- Do you disagree with any approaches, and if so, why? Why might a person support this approach?
- What other approaches might be helpful?

Facilitator’s note

In many communities, there is tension between community members (especially people of color) and the police. Additionally, some people may not feel comfortable with

police due to their immigration status. We recommend acknowledging this, and recognizing the many identities and perspectives of your group’s participants.

⁹ Flook & Fuligni, “Family and School Spillover in Adolescents’ Daily Lives.”

¹⁰ Echols, Solomon, & Graham “Same spaces, different races: What can cafeteria seating patterns tell us about intergroup relations in middle school?”

Approach 7 – Train teachers on culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy

Teachers are not always aware of their own implicit biases. This is especially pronounced when the demographics of teachers do not mirror those of the student body. Training teachers in culturally responsive teaching practices, such as using person-centered language, will aid teachers in not only addressing their own implicit bias, but will also give teachers the tools to intervene when a student is being biased towards a peer.

Part B

Getting ready for next time (5 minutes)

Facilitators: Review the details (when, where, how long) for the next session.

Participants: Before the next session, read Session 4 in the guide. If you want, do some additional research on potential action ideas.

Session 4

WHAT NEXT STEPS SHOULD WE TAKE?

Goals for the session:

- Brainstorm some specific ideas for making an impact.
- Decide which ideas you want to recommend.
- Come up with some next steps for implementing your ideas.

This session is designed to help you sum up the ideas you want to recommend, as well as think further about your own action plans.

PART A

Brainstorming about ways to make a difference (20 minutes)

Take some time to brainstorm about action possibilities. Use your notes from previous sessions to help you remember ideas you already came up with.

Use your imagination! Make a list that everyone can see—on newsprint or on a chalkboard. It will help if you use four categories:

- Individual actions
- Projects small groups of people could create
- Activities that businesses, churches, clubs, schools and other groups could undertake
- Community-wide actions—including individuals, organizations and public officials working together

PART B

Setting priorities (20 minutes)

Look over the list you just created:

1. In each of the four categories (individual, small-group, organizational, community-wide), what two or three ideas seem most practical and useful?
2. Are any of these ideas already being tried in the community? How could we support those efforts?

Tips for facilitators:

- Review the ground rules set in the first session.
- Recap the conversation from the previous sessions.
- Describe the goals of the session.
- Divide the session into three parts. Use the amount of time suggested for each as a guide.
- Ask participants to respond to the questions.
- Don't feel like you have to cover every question.

PART C

Working on next steps (20 minutes)

Pick one or two ideas from the list and spend some time on those in particular:

1. What would it take to turn this idea into reality?
2. What assets could we use to help move this idea forward?
3. What kinds of support or help do we need in order to take these steps?
4. What would our next steps be? What other groups might we link up with?

KEY TERMS, DEFINITIONS, AND 'PERSON-CENTERED LANGUAGE'

Ableism: Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on differences in physical, mental and/or emotional ability; usually that of able-bodied/minded persons against people with illness and disabilities.

Adulthood: Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions against young people, in favor of older person(s).

Ageism: Prejudice and/or discrimination against people because of their real or perceived age. Although ageism is often assumed to be bias against older people, members of other groups, such as teens, are also targets of prejudice and/or discrimination based on their age.

Antisemitism: Hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a religious, ethnic or racial group.

Bias: An inclination or preference either for or against an individual or group that interferes with impartial judgment.

Classism: Prejudice and/or discrimination against people because of their real or perceived social and economic status.

Dialogue: An exchange of ideas and opinions; a discussion between representatives of parties to a conflict that is aimed at resolution.

Disability: A physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or actions or participate in typical daily activities and interactions.

Discrimination: The denial of justice and fair treatment by both individuals and institutions in many arenas, including: employment, education, housing, banking and political rights. Discrimination is an action that can follow prejudicial thinking.

Diversity: The wide variety of shared and different personal and group characteristics among human beings; different or varied. *The population of the United States is made up of people from different places and from diverse racial and cultural groups.*

Ethnicity: Refers to a person's identification with a group based on characteristics such as shared history, ancestry, geographic and language origin, and culture.

Gender: The socially-defined "rules" and roles for men and women in a society. The attitudes, customs and values associated with gender are socially constructed; however, individuals develop their gender identities in two primary ways: through an innate sense of their own identity and through their life experiences and interactions with others. Dominant Western society generally defines gender as a binary system—men and women—but many cultures define gender as more fluid and existing along a continuum.

Gender expression: Refers to the ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, haircut, voice and emphasizing, de-emphasizing or changing their bodies' characteristics. Gender expression is not an indicator of sexual orientation.

Hate crime: A crime—such as assault or defacement of property—motivated by hostility to the victim because of their perceived race, creed, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

Heterosexism/Homophobia: Prejudice and/or discrimination against people who are or who are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ). While homophobia is usually used to describe a blatant fear or hatred of LGBT people, heterosexism is a broader term used to describe attitudes and behaviors based on the belief that heterosexuality is the norm. Other related, specific, terms are transphobia and biphobia.

Immigrant: A person who comes to a country to take up permanent residence.

Implicit bias: The unconscious attitudes, stereotypes and unintentional actions (positive or negative) towards members of a group merely because of their membership in that group. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. When people are acting out of their implicit bias, they are not even aware that their actions are biased.

Islamophobia: Prejudice and/or discrimination against people who are or who are perceived to be Muslim and a fear or dislike of Islamic culture.

LGBTQQIA+: Any combination of letters attempting to represent all the identities in the queer community, this example (although not exhaustive) represents Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Ally. *For a more exhaustive list of related terms, visit https://www.lsu.edu/lacasa/site_files/item71312.pdf.*

Nationality: Solely refers to a person's citizenship by origin, birth or naturalization.

People of color: A collective term for people of Asian, African, Latin and Native American backgrounds; as opposed to the collective "White" for those of European ancestry.

Prejudice: Making a decision about a person or group of people without sufficient knowledge. Prejudicial thinking is frequently based on stereotypes.

Race: Refers to the categories into which society places individuals on the basis of physical characteristics (such as skin color, hair type, facial form and eye shape). Though many believe that race is determined by biology, it is now widely accepted that this classification system was in fact created for social and political reasons. There are actually more genetic and biological differences within the racial groups defined by society than between different racial groups.

Racism: Prejudice and/or discrimination against people based on the social construction of race. Differences in physical characteristics (e.g. skin color, hair texture, eye shape) are used to support a system of inequities.

Religion: An organized system of beliefs, observances, rituals and rules used to worship a god or group of gods.

Sex: Biological classification of male, female or intersex (based on genetic or physiological features); as opposed to gender.

Sexism: Prejudice and/or discrimination against people based on their real or perceived sex. Sexism is based on a belief (conscious or unconscious) that there is a natural order based on sex.

Socio-economic status: An individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, as measured by factors such as income, wealth and occupation.

Stereotype: An oversimplified generalization about a person or group of people without regard for individual differences. Even seemingly positive stereotypes that link a person or group to a specific positive trait can have negative consequences.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth and/or whose gender expression does not match society's expectations with regard to gender roles. The term may include identities such as: transsexual, gender queer, gender nonconforming, FTM, MTF, and gender-variant. Transgender people may or may not choose to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically.

Transphobia: Fear or hatred of transgender people; transphobia is manifested in a number of ways, including violence, harassment, and discrimination.

Undocumented person: A person who does not possess the documentation required for legal immigration or residence.

Weightism: Prejudice and discrimination against overweight and obese people.

Xenophobia: Prejudice and/or discrimination against anyone or anything that is perceived to be foreign or outside one's own group, nation or culture. Xenophobia is commonly used to describe negative attitudes toward foreigners and immigrants.

Person-Centered Language

Person-Centered Language (also known as Person First Language) originally stems from the disabled community as a way to put the person first and the (dis)ability last when communicating. Using person-centered language can help make a conversation more inclusive and less alienating for people of diverse backgrounds. Below are some examples of how language can be altered to become more 'person-centered':

- Rather than saying "disabled" say *"a person who is not able-bodied"* or *"a person of differing ability."*
- Rather than saying "illegal" say *"a person who is undocumented."*
- Rather than assuming a person's gender based on how they appear, ask them what their *preferred pronouns* are (she, he, they, etc.).

*Visit this resource for ideas of how to challenge biased language: <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/challenging-biased-language>

Customize the Discussion Guide for your school: AN EXAMPLE

Students and faculty at Casco Bay High School in Portland, Maine have been grappling with issues of social and racial justice for some time now, and the students wanted to understand these issues as they were happening in their community in real time. There was an incident of bias based on race that occurred outside of the school that was also on students' minds. In early 2018, students and faculty at Casco Bay High School used the "Addressing Bias in Schools" guide as a template for designing a day-long community dialogue event.

The high school participates in several programs including the Expeditionary Learning and the Seeds for Peace programs, and they used the "Addressing Bias in Schools" guide to kick off the Arc Towards Justice expeditionary learning program. They wanted to integrate the exercise into something meaningful – something more than a one-off event.

Principal Derek Pierce and Social Studies teacher Stewart Croft felt that for students to have a meaningful dialogue, they needed to have it among themselves. They selected 14 sophomore students to facilitate this dialogue. They then assigned an adult educator to be an ally for each student facilitator, helping the student and assisting especially with following the timeline and keeping time.

The participants broke into small groups of around ten people each. Teachers from other schools in the district observed the event, as well as an Inclusion Officer. They also had social workers and guidance counselors on hand in case any students became distressed.

The organizers wanted to create an experience that brought together the community instead of just the school, and they contextualized the guide to reflect that difference. The event was advertised and open to the community. Around 30 adults participated in the discussion. The organizers were intentional about recruiting a diverse array of participants and did so by providing free lunch and offering free babysitting. To view the advertisement that was used, visit: https://www.portlandschools.org/news___calendars/news/c_b_h_s_students_invite_public_to_join_dialogue_on. To view how the event was reported on locally, visit: <http://www.theforecaster.net/portland-students-want-community-to-take-bias-seriously/>

Before the day-long event, the teachers walked through the exercise with the students. The organizers also brought in guest speakers to kick off the event. They held an hour-long panel discussion with four guest speakers where they asked the question “Why is this work important?”

The organizers utilized the facilitation tips in the guide and created an “FAQ for Facilitators and Faculty Supporters” document to provide additional support for the student facilitators. They kept the spirit of the guide, but added details to help move the conversation along. They recognized that the student facilitators needed a little more structure on what to say and how to say it, so they added instructional moves.

The organizers reworked the four sessions into three separate sessions to help ground participants in the subject of addressing identity through the “Think, Pair, Share” strategy. They utilized the “Personal Identity Charts” exercise to help set the stage for an honest discussion on discrimination. They then had the participants review the “Key Terms, Definitions, and ‘Person-Centered Language’” section to begin framing the discussion on discrimination. They also had the students write down their thoughts before turning to a partner to discuss the topics after each section. At the end of the day, the facilitators closed the circle by sharing what they thought about the day. *Refer to pages 26 - 29 for a detailed description of the exercises that were adapted for the guide during these sessions.*

The organizers opted to have the students facilitate the conversations and to have an intergenerational experience open to the entire community. They found that the facilitators needed to be trained in facilitation techniques. They also found that it was best for the teachers to experience the discussion for themselves before facilitating.

At the end of the event, students brainstormed ideas on how to address bias in community. The main question was “How do I take these ideas and go forward?” They recorded their ideas on chart paper. They recommended implementing a process to narrow down the ideas. Some of the ideas were ambitious ones for the community as a whole; students talked about which ideas seemed realistic and what kinds of next steps they might take. For each of the ideas, students tried to clarify what they could accomplish and map out what they could do on certain timelines.

The key to the success of Casco Bay High School’s experience with the guide was that the organizers coordinated the guide as part of other, ongoing student-learning experiences. They even incorporated the discussion into their curriculum. For example, a Casco Bay English teacher used the dialogue in class to discuss Ta-Nehisi Coates’ book, “Between the World and Me.” The social studies curriculum used prompts from the guide to help frame some of the issues that black Americans face. The students and teachers also embarked on a 6-week podcast series on raising consciousness and enthusiasm for going deeper into the topics that were brought up at the event.

The organizers of the event plan to organize another event in January 2019. They hope to bring together an even more diverse group of people to participate in the dialogue together.

FAQs FOR FACILITATORS AND FACULTY SUPPORTERS

Created by Casco Bay High School

What do you do if some adults/students are not participating?

- Genially offer to the group, “would anyone who has not had the chance to speak like to speak?” or “Johnna, is there anything you would like to add?”

What do you do if there is a behavioral issue in your group?

- Seek support from the faculty supporter in your room.

What if a student/adult is upset and needs to leave?

- That is OK. Offer that it is fine if someone needs to take a break to regain composure or for whatever other reason. If it's clear a student needs even more support, the faculty support should go with the student. Provide social work and administrative support as needed.

What if adult support personnel have facilitation concerns/advice for the student facilitators?

- Please check in with the student facilitator during a break.

What do you do if there is *too much* time for a session?

- Please use the optional activities listed with each session. You can also offer a longer break. But try to avoid adding more than five minutes to the allotted break time.

What do you do if there is *not enough* time?

- Please stick largely to the scheduled time for sessions and breaks. If you need to run a few minutes over because your group needs better closure on a session, this is fine. It might be wise to ask the permission of the group first. Then try to make it up with a slightly more efficient 2nd session or with a shorter break. (But do allow breaks.)

What do you do if someone (or some folks) in your group is talking too much?

- Reinforce the norm: “share the air” or “one person talks at a time” at the outset of a session. You may also want to add time limits (eg: 1 minute) for each person when doing a “go around” where each person shares.

What do you do if someone in the group says something that offends you (as the facilitator)?

- Use the norms to help navigate this.
- Presume positive intentions.
- Recognize it's OK to be emotional or not perfectly composed.
- Pause to see if someone else in the group may first respond in the same way you might. If not, then you might rely on the norm “if you are bothered by something that was said, say so and say why.”
- Strive to share your perspective in a way that the other group member does not feel shut down or shamed.

What if people want to leave and go to the bathroom?

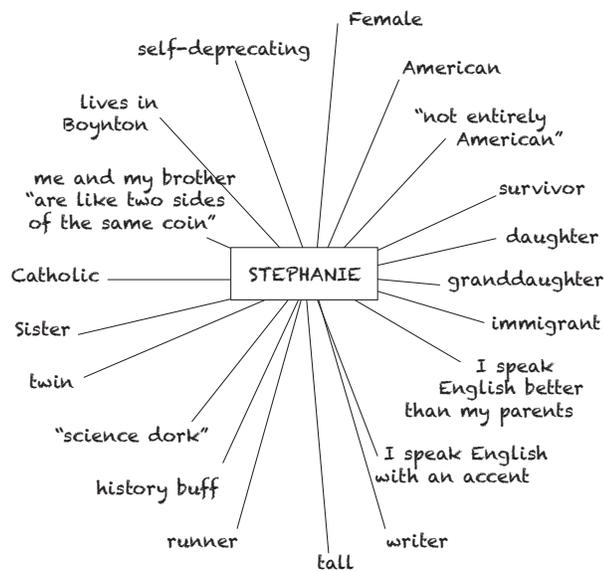
- That's OK... We would not advise letting more than one person leave at a time. If someone is gone for too long or too frequently, you might want to consult your faculty support.

OPTIONAL EXERCISES TO PAIR WITH GUIDE

Session 1: PART B INTRODUCTIONS (p. 11)

Create Personal Identity Charts (5 minutes)

1. Tell students that you will be creating identity charts. Make sure you define identity charts by saying that: *“An identity chart is a diagram that individuals fill in with words and phrases that they use to describe themselves as well as the labels that society gives them.”*
2. Ask the group to brainstorm categories we each consider when thinking about the question, “Who am I?”—categories such as our role in a family (e.g., daughter, sister, mother), our hobbies and interests (e.g., guitar player, football fan), our background (e.g., religion, race, nationality, hometown, place of birth), and our physical characteristics.
3. As they suggest categories, write these either on a white board or on chart paper so that all participants can see it.
4. Show them the example of a completed identity chart before they create one of their own.



An identity chart is a diagram that individuals fill in with words and phrases they use to describe themselves as well as the labels that society gives them.

Session 1: PART B, No. 4 (p. 11)

Have you experienced bias or discrimination?

Think / Pair / Share

In an activity based on the “Think, Pair, Share” strategy, students write and discuss their ideas with a partner before sharing them with the larger group. This format gives students the opportunity to thoughtfully respond to questions in written form and to engage in meaningful dialogue with other students about these issues. It is a helpful way to give students time to compose their ideas before sharing them with the class. The “Think, Pair, Share” strategy helps students build confidence, encourages greater participation, and often results in more thoughtful discussions.

Procedure:

1. **Think** (5-10 minutes)

After reading the key terms (p.19-21), read the questions out loud. Ask students to respond to the questions in writing. Allow 5 minutes to respond.

- Have you experienced bias, discrimination or a hate crime? This could be a situation where you were being discriminated against, one where you saw someone else being discriminated against, one where you’ve read or seen it in the news or media, or one where a whole group was being targeted.
- What happened?
- What did you think about it?
- How did it affect people afterward?

PLEASE EMPHASIZE and REPEAT to students: The question posed is: *“This could be a situation where you were being discriminated against, one where you saw someone else being discriminated against, one where you’ve read or seen it in the news or media, or one where a whole group was being targeted.”*

Students may be thinking that this is just about racial bias, so they will need a lot of prompting to really think of examples.

They can think about discrimination based on the clothes they wear, their weight, their age, their sexual orientation, their class (how much money they have). This can be something they experienced in person, online or on social media.

They can also think about the ways that other people were treated better for certain reasons (think about who is more popular or treated better for some reason).

Remind them that it is okay if they are unsure. The point is to have something that they can write about and share with the group.

2. **Pair** (5 minutes)

Have students pair up and share their responses with each other.

3. **Share** (10 minutes)

When the larger group reconvenes, ask participants to share their experiences. Remember to say: *“I know some of the things we discuss today might be difficult to talk about, and if you ever feel uncomfortable sharing, you can always say ‘pass’ and we will move onto the next person in the circle.”*

4. **Debrief** (5 minutes)

After each participant has had a chance to talk about their experiences, tell participants that they will be doing a debrief. Tell them that you’d like to know what they are thinking now that they’ve heard from the group.

If you have time: Ask participants to think of a “take-away” from this conversation. This could be just one or two sentences about what they’ve heard. Or it could be a longer conversation depending on how much time you have left. It may be helpful to start with a volunteer and then move around the table.

If you only have a few minutes: Tell them that you’ll be doing a “whip-around.” They should think of one word that summarizes their “take-away” from the conversation. Ask for a volunteer to begin and move around the table.

Session 2: PART A (p. 12)

Why are these incidents happening now?

Think / Pair / Share (30 minutes)

Procedure:

1. **Think** (5-10 minutes)

After reading the views posed in this section, ask members to reflect on “Questions about the views.” Allow five minutes for students to write:

- Which views come closest to your own?
- What do you think is important about each view?
- Do you disagree with any viewpoints, and if so, why? Why would a person support this view?
- What other viewpoints might be out there that we don’t see here?

2. **Pair** (5-10 minutes)

Have students pair up and share their responses with each other. **IMPORTANT:** Tell them that they will be reporting back on what the other participant has said, so the partners have to listen carefully to each other. Make sure that each participant will report back on:

- Which view comes closest to their own. Why?
- Which view they disagree with. Why?

3. **Share** (10-15 minutes)

When the larger group reconvenes, ask participants to share what their partner said. In this way, the strategy focuses on students' skills as careful listeners.

Say: "When we debrief, we will try to include something new that you heard as the group was sharing. So be sure to listen to each other as we speak and notice when somebody says something you agree with."

4. **Debrief** (5 minutes)

Tell participants that they will be doing a "whip-around." Tell the group that each participant should think of a one-sentence summary of their thinking. They should also include a "new perspective or something you are thinking more about after hearing the group."

Session 3: PART A (p. 14)

What should we do to prevent and address these incidents?

Think / Pair / Share (30 minutes)

Procedure:

1. **Think** (5 minutes)

After reading the approaches listed in this section, ask members to reflect on "Questions about the approaches." Allow five minutes for students to write on the following questions:

- Which approach seems most important to you? Why?
- What do you think is important about each approach?
- Do you disagree with any approaches, and if so, why? Why might a person support this approach?
- What other approaches might be helpful?

2. **Pair** (5-10 minutes)

Have students pair up and share their responses.

3. **Share** (15-20 minutes)

When the larger group reconvenes, ask pairs to report back on their conversations.

IMPORTANT: Preview the debrief for them by saying: "For the debrief, we will go around and say what you are thinking, but also what new thinking you have based on what you heard. So all participants should be listening to each other as they go around."

4. **Debrief:** (5-10 minutes)

Tell participants that they will be doing a "whip-around." Tell the group that each participant should think of a one-sentence summary of their thinking. They should also include a "new perspective or something you are thinking more about after hearing the group";

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Public Agenda helps build a democracy that works for everyone. By elevating a diversity of voices, forging common ground and improving dialogue and collaboration among leaders and communities, Public Agenda fuels progress on critical issues, including education, health care and community engagement. Founded in 1975, Public Agenda is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization based in New York City.

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About The Nellie Mae Education Foundation

As the largest philanthropic organization in New England dedicated exclusively to education, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation has been committed to reshaping the high school learning experience by working with districts, schools and organizations to implement the principles of student-centered learning – learning that is personalized, engaging, competency-based and happens anytime, anywhere. We have been excited to see the scaling of student-centered practices and personalization through New England and nationwide. Yet too often the spread of such practices is not defined by rigorous or equitable distributions. We believe that high quality renditions of equitable, student-centered learning are critical to preparing students for college and career, and preparing New England communities for strong futures. Over the past year and half, the foundation has been engaged in an equity and strategy review and development process to examine our organization's investments and culture through the lens of racial equity – looking at how power is operating through resource distribution, whose voices are heard, what rules are in place, and who has authority and influence. You can read more about that process [here](#).