Confronting Implicit Bias
Through Exemplary Educator Preparation

Educators, particularly teachers, are a critical factor in facilitating the learning and academic achievement of *all* students regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, primary language, socioeconomic status, etc. Yet, studies continue to show that educators' beliefs and attitudes influence expectations of their students. These beliefs and attitudes—often unconsciously activated and with no provocation by the students—are referred to as *implicit biases.*

WHAT IS IMPLICIT BIAS?

Implicit biases are the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our actions, understanding of events, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Activated involuntarily, without awareness or intentional control, they may advantage some people while disadvantaging others (Kirwan, 2018). "Social scientists believe that implicit biases are learned as young as age 3, and may be fueled by stereotypes perpetuated in the media or other beliefs passed along by parents, peers, and other community members." (Flannery, 2018) The key takeaway is that "everyone" is susceptible, and his or her implicit biases can have influence in every sector of society (i.e., employment, criminal justice, health industry and education). All is not lost, however—once these implicit biases are identified they can be "unlearned."

IMPLICIT BIAS AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The landscape of our work as educators – The shifting demographics of our nation are magnified in the changing demographics of our schools. As of 2014, the overall number of non-White students has surpassed 50 percent while White teachers still account for 84 percent of the teaching force in the public school system (Flannery, 2018). The Hispanic student population has jumped significantly, and the Asian population continues to show a steady increase, while the overall percentages of White and Black students are decreasing (Kennedy, 2018). Students are increasingly multiracial, coming from multiple races and ethnic groups. In addition to the racial and ethnic changes, there are more students living in poverty, more English language learners, and more students whose life experiences differ from the predominantly White teaching force. Even as major cities and states become more diverse, rural and suburban communities, long dominated by White families, are also becoming more racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse.

It is against this backdrop that aspiring educators (referred to as "candidates" within the field of educator preparation) must be prepared to enter the classroom "profession ready" on day one. This extends beyond having a deep understanding of the subject matter they will teach and knowing how to use various instructional strategies. Profession ready means that educators understand the shifting demographics and are prepared to engage in culturally responsive ways with diverse student populations.

The internet has also made our classrooms into global communities. Educators and students encounter implicit bias through interactions with instructional resources, online sources, and individuals and groups through collaborative projects and distance learning environments. Whether diverse groups of students are physically present in a teacher's classroom, implicit biases about diverse groups may be present. Educators must be prepared to recognize, refute, and counter these implicit biases regardless of whether they

arise within resources students access, among student attitudes, through interaction with others outside the classroom, from other educators, and from the individual educator.

To accomplish this goal, educator preparation experiences, particularly teacher preparation programs, must include opportunities for candidates to safely examine and question their own implicit biases. They must reflect on how their previous experiences and beliefs affect the degree to which they can create a safe and equitable learning environment for *all* students. And teacher prep programs must help candidates develop the ability to recognize and address implicit bias in the many places it may arise with individuals, institutions, and resources that students encounter.

The Moral Imperative – Research shows that non-Black teachers have significantly lower expectations of Black students (Gerhenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2015). Such expectations can unknowingly lead a teacher to change their instructional strategies and/or select resources that do not challenge or develop Black students' cognitive or analytical skills. Research also reveals discipline disparities that especially disadvantage Black male students. A Yale study (Gilliam, et al, 2016) examined how early educators filter student behavior through their own implicit biases that contributed to discipline disparities among White and Black preschool students. Black male students are four times as likely to be suspended as their White male counterparts for the same behavioral offenses.

There are educators who view Asian Americans as the "model minority"– students who get perfect grades and go to Ivy League universities. This belief assumes Asian Americans are a monolithic group and fails to recognize the challenges and the unrealistic "academic" expectations experienced by many subgroups of Asian American students (Boiko-Weyrach, 2018).

If teachers are to achieve an equitable learning environment for all students, then teacher candidates must be educated to identify, counter, and refute their implicit biases as they prepare to become profession ready.

Aspirational Learning Experiences – For preservice and inservice educators to become proficient in exposing and addressing implicit biases to create more equitable learning opportunities for all students, they must engage in learning experiences accessible along the professional career continuum, from recruitment through retirement. Aspiring educators/teacher candidates and in service educators will have a higher degree of success if they are supported by collaborative and collective partnerships with NEA and its affiliates, school districts, teacher preparation programs, external partners and community, and policymakers.

Supporting the growth of all educators – NEA provided visionary guidance in an expert panel report titled, "Great Teaching and Learning: Creating the Culture to Support Professional Excellence" (NEA, 2018). The report described aspirational learning experiences for candidates and supports for inservice educators that include, but are not limited to, the following:

Aspiring Educators/Teacher Candidates

- ✪ Programs focus on candidate ability to meet student needs through culturally responsive practice and sensitivity to student differences including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation/gender identification, disability, religious beliefs, residence, primary language.

- ✪ Candidates participate in activities and experiences that illuminate how each person sees the world through eyes of unique personal and cultural experiences. Through deep reflection, candidates understand that one's own personal cultural lens impacts her/his interpretation of events.

- ✪ Candidates develop skills to reflect on their experiences, seeking to understand other perspectives (students, families, fellow educators) with different personal/cultural backgrounds and to understand that one's own personal cultural lens impacts her/his perspective.

✪ Candidates engage in a range of field experiences/clinical practices that approximate the duties and experiences they will encounter in future professional assignments both within preK–12 classrooms and beyond.

✪ Cooperating teachers and clinical faculty have the experience and mentoring skills to foster teacher candidates' professional growth and self-awareness. Faculty refine their own mentoring skills, deepen their own understanding of personal/cultural perspectives, and grow in their support of candidates through these roles.

✪ Educator preparation program faculty have recent, relevant preK–12 experience to support candidates in working with a wide range student needs, cultural backgrounds, and school/community settings.

Inservice Educators

✪ Training activities help inservice educators to serve more effectively in roles as socially just mentor teachers or instructional coaches.

✪ Support structures and programs for professional learning help inservice educators to explore and acknowledge personal beliefs and biases toward various cultural groups.

✪ Professional growth activities allow educators to model effective professional practice including building a positive, inclusive culture of support for peers and preK–12 student learning.

✪ Educators collaborate with each other and communities in developing culturally responsive opportunities for students to engage in authentic, community-based learning projects.

✪ Educators identify, understand, and work to mitigate culturally dominant practices that create inequities for some cultural groups.

✪ Schools and districts create regular and varied opportunities for stakeholders of all cultures to contribute their knowledge, abilities, and perspectives to help create learning opportunities and impact school operation.

✪ Educators engage in self-reflective practices to assess growth around issues of diversity, equity, and cultural competence.

✪ Educators model practices that support diversity and inclusion, and they propose and implement culturally responsive changes into school and district organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NEA recommends that educator preparation providers collaborate with schools, districts, and NEA and its affiliates to implement the following programmatic and policy changes to address implicit bias:

✪ Educators should collaborate with communities and districts to develop culturally responsive opportunities for students to engage in authentic community-based learning projects that identify and take action to overcome implicit bias.

✪ Educator preparation programs, schools/districts, and NEA affiliates should collaborate to develop and implement professional growth experiences for mentors and cooperating teachers to help them model and mentor culturally responsive practices when working with candidates.

✪ Educator preparation programs should provide their faculty with the training needed to create supportive environments where candidates can gain personal awareness and understanding of cultural, economic, and other factors that have impacted them.

✪ Educator preparation programs should conduct curriculum audits to identify spaces where teacher candidates can safely examine and question their own implicit biases.

✪ Educator preparation programs, school/districts, and NEA affiliates should create multiple opportunities for students and

faculty to engage in conversations about racial, ethnic, gender, and orientation-based inequity and social injustice.

⭐ Educator preparation programs, school/districts, and NEA affiliates should provide intentional training and opportunities to enable students and faculty to effectively facilitate conversations about racial, ethnic, gender, and orientation-based inequity and social injustice.

⭐ States should create networks of educator preparation programs, districts, and schools to develop and disseminate resources to be adopted or adapted for local use with aspiring, emerging (early career), and professional educators to help them identify eliminate implicit bias.

⭐ NEA affiliates, school districts, and public school partners should work together to recruit, train, and support educators who have demonstrated a commitment to reducing bias in their instructional practices and in classrooms, schools, and communities.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Ball State University

Ball State University created a program for its elementary education majors in which community members from the diverse community of Muncie, Indiana, serve as "community mentors" during a semester of integrated field experiences and pedagogy coursework. Faculty and school districts report dramatic increases in the understanding of culture, self, and the ability to engage in culturally responsive practices among candidates who participate in this program.
http://cms.bsu.edu/-/media/www/departmentalcontent/institutionaldiversity/pdf/2014pedagogyseminar/zygmunt.pdf?la=en

Illinois State University

The National Center for Urban Education at Illinois State University provides a summer preparatory experience in which candidates live in the homes of community members near Chicago public schools immediately prior to student teaching. Candidates develop a deep appreciation and respect for both students, their families, and the communities, replacing stereotypical deficit models of low expectations for student potential.
https://ncue.illinoisstate.edu/

San Francisco Teacher Residency Program

Through its teacher residency program, San Francisco State University recognized that candidates of color particularly lacked the kind of community and cultural support they needed to help them flourish during teacher preparation and induction. Their report "Soul Care" explains the kinds of support that have increased student learning in the classroom and contributed to successful retention of diverse new teachers in the profession.
http://www.sfteacherresidency.org/beyond-brochures/

Denver University

Denver University (DU) is taking a deeper look at the standards that guide the design of teacher preparation programs across the country—the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium's Model Core Teaching Standards and Learning Progressions. They noted that it is possible to use these standards to develop teachers deemed effective based on test scores or academics at the heavy cost of devaluing the cultural, linguistic, and family assets diverse students bring with them. The DU design for teacher preparation includes within its definition of effectiveness that the teacher "infuses cultural relevance…" and "advocates for change…" in pursuit of an equitable and culturally responsive learning environment. See Dr. Maria Salazar's presentation at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8joyeG5oE88

RESOURCES AND LINKS

Boiko-Weyrach, A. (2018). Asian American students push to reveal what the 'model minority' myth hides. PRI: The World, March 21, 2018. Retrieved 03/01/2018 from https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-03-21/asian-american-students-push-reveal-what-model-minority-myth-hides

Dee, T., & Gershenson, S. (2018). Unconscious Bias in the Classroom: Evidence and Opportunities. Mountain View, CA: Google Inc. Retrieved from https://goo.gl/O6Btqi

Flannery, M. E. (2015). When implicit bias shapes teacher expectations. NEA Today, Sep 9. 2015. Retrieved 03/01/2018 from http://neatoday.org/2015/09/09/when-implicit-bias-shapes-teacher-expectations/

Gerhenson, Holt, & Papageorge, (2015). Who believes in me? The effect of student-teacher demographic match on teacher expectations. Upjohn Institute Working Papers. Retrieved 03/01/2018 from http://research.upjohn.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1248&context=up_workingpapers

Gilliam, W.S., Maupin, A.N., Reyes, C. R., Accavitti, M., and Shic, F. (2016). Do early educators' implicit biases regarding sex and race relate to behavior expectations and recommendations of preschool expulsions and suspensions? Yale University Child Study Center. Retrieved 03/01/2018 from https://medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/zigler/publications/Preschool%20Implicit%20Bias%20Policy%20Brief_final_9_26_276766_5379_v1.pdf

Kennedy, M. (2018). U.S. school population is becoming less white, less black. American School & University, July 19, 2018. Retrieved 03/01/2018 from http://www.asumag.com/facilities-management/us-school-population-becoming-less-white-less-black

NEA (2018). Great Teaching and Learning: Creating the Culture to Support Professional Excellence. Retrieved 03/01/2018 from http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Great%20Teaching%20and%20Learning%20Report.pdf

Osler, J. (2016). Beyond brochures: Practicing "soul care" in the recruitment of teachers of color. San Francisco Teacher Residency. Retrieved 03/01/2018 from http://2nzvmtmxyesbi7fm3pk4v9h7.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/SFTR-SoulCare-Final.pdf

Peters, T., Margolin, M., Fragnoli, K., & Bloom, D. (2016). What's race got to do with it? Preservice teachers and White racial identity. Current Issues in Education, 19(1). Retrieved from http://cie.asu.edu/ojs/index.php/cieatasu/article/view/1661

Salazar, M. (2012). Presentation: The InTASC Standards: Re-profes-sionalizing Teaching". 2012 School Improvement Summit, July 16-17, 2012. Video retrieved 03/01/2018 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8joyeG5oE88

Jamie Utt, J. (2015). 10 ways well-meaning white teachers bring racism into our schools. Everyday Feminism, Aug 16, 2016. Retrieved 03/01/2018 from http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/08/10-ways-well-meaning-white-teachers-bring-racism-into-our-schools/