Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports: Enhancing Equity in School Discipline

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Participants will be introduced to practices for enhancing equity in school discipline including:

- Understanding implicit bias
- Utilizing PBIS ethnicity data
- Recognizing Vulnerable Decision Points
- Designing neutralizing routines
Opening Activity

“Implicit bias is like the wind: you can’t see it, but you can sure see its effects.”

Dr. Walter S. Gilliam, Yale University, 2016
“If we want to maintain the trust of parents and communities in our schools, we must start by treating our children with respect and human dignity...we also have to take a hard look at ourselves and the implicit biases that we all carry. The ugly truth – the harsh reality – is that still today, some children are far more likely to face harsh discipline than others, simply because of their zip code or the color of their skin.”

Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education
October 30, 2015
What is Implicit Bias?

implic-it bi-as /im ˈplisit ˈbīəs/: The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Activated involuntarily, without awareness or intentional control. Can be either positive or negative. Everyone is susceptible.
Where Implicit Biases Originate

Our implicit biases are the result of mental associations that have formed by the direct and indirect messaging we receive, often about different groups of people.

When we are constantly exposed to certain identity groups being paired with certain characteristics, we can begin to automatically and unconsciously associate the identity with the characteristics, whether or not that association aligns with reality.
A father and his son are in a car accident. The father dies instantly, and the son is taken to the nearest hospital.

The doctor comes in and exclaims, "I can't operate on this boy."

"Why not?" the nurse asks.

"Because he's my son," the doctor responds.

How is this possible?
- We learn through patterned repetition
- When two concepts become associated with one another in our memory, our brains create automatic scripts
- These automatic scripts mean that the association and related recall operates without our awareness or intent
Implicit bias is a product of **System 1 thinking**. We act on our implicit biases without awareness. That’s how they can undermine our true intentions and our decisions.
John Ridley Stroop
Let’s Try It Together!
Ethnicity Discipline Data
In most programs across the country, aspiring teachers, principals, and superintendents are taught far too little about disproportionality in school discipline and its racist undercurrents.

Edward J. Smith & Shaun R. Harper
Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, 2015
The fundamental purpose of PBIS is to make schools more effective, efficient and equitable learning environments for all students.
| District                      | All | EL | SED | SWD | AA | AI | n  | FILP | HISP | PID | Two | e  | All | EL | SED | SWD | AA | AI | n  | FILP | HISP | PID | Two | e  | All | EL | SED | SWD | AA | AI | n  | FILP | HISP | PID | Two | e  |
|------------------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|----|----|----|-----|------|-----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|-----|----|----|----|-----|------|-----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|-----|----|----|----|-----|------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| Los Angeles Unified          |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Acton-Guaje Dist Unified     |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Altadena Unified            |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Arcadia Unified             |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Azusa Unified               |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Baldwin Park Unified        |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Bellflower Unified          |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Beverly Hills Unified       |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Brea Unified                |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Brea Olinda Unified         |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Compton Unified             |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Corona Unified              |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Covina Unified              |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Duarte Unified              |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| El Monte City                |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| El Monte Unified             |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| El Segundo Unified          |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| El Monte Unified             |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Grover Elementary           |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Granite Unified             |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Grand Terrace Unified       |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| German Unified              |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Hacienda Heights Unified    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |
| Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |    |    |     |      |     |     |    |     |

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As I was doing my morning hallway supervision, a teacher called me over to where she was berating a black male student about his pants. She ordered me to take him to the discipline office, where I could “fix him.” Those were her actual words. As Marcus and I walked down the hallway, he began pointing out other boys with sagging pants. All of the other boys were white.

I asked Marcus to wait for me by the office. I’m certain that he wondered if he had changed my mind when he saw me make a beeline for that same teacher in conversation with one of the other boys we had seen. As I approached, I said, loud enough for the teacher to hear me, “What’s up with those pants, young man?”

It wasn’t the response of the student that jarred me. It was the teacher. She turned to him and said, “Look at you. Pull those up, would you?” Not only did she not ask that I discipline him, she asked him nicely to pull up his pants. We both waited patiently while he did so, and then she turned to me, “See? Wasn’t that easy? All we have to do is ask them.”
Effects of PBIS on Discipline Disproportionality

Vincent, Swain-Bradway, Tobin & May, 2011

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Longitudinal Progress

Office Discipline Referrals Per Day Per 100 Students

(McIntosh, Ellwood, McCall, & Girvan, in press)

National Median

- White
- Black

2012-13 2013-14 2014-15
Referrals by Ethnicity

Does an ethnic group receive referrals proportionate to their size in the school population?
Students with Referrals by Ethnicity

Of the students who have referrals in the school, does an ethnic group receive referrals proportionate to their size in the school population?
Referral Risk Index

Are ethnic groups being referred at the same rate?
To ensure an equitable education for all students, there is a need for school teams to review their data informing whether implementation of PBIS has improved the outcomes for each racial/ethnic minority group.

McIntosh, Eliason, Horner, & May 2013
Vulnerable Decision Points
Vulnerable Decision Points

Research shows that the majority of disproportionality comes from implicit bias, and that disproportionality varies based on the situation (e.g., location, time of day, type of incident).

By identifying these vulnerable decision points and teaching a strategy to use in place of exclusionary discipline, school teams have decreased the discipline gap.

Kent McIntosh, Rob Horner, George Sugai, 2016
Implicit bias is a product of **System 1 thinking**. We act on our implicit biases without awareness. That’s how they can undermine our true intentions and decisions.

**Fast Decisions**

**Slow Decisions**

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Vulnerable Decision Point

Implicit Bias

Disproportionate Discipline

Subjective Situation
SO WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

- Train school personnel to **identify situations in which their decisions may be vulnerable to bias** (e.g., fatigue, subjective behavior, unfamiliar student)
- Using a self-review routine just prior to making a discipline decision can **neutralize** the effects of implicit bias
Neutralizing Routines
Neutralizing Routines for Reducing Implicit Bias

**Situation**
Lack of positive interactions with student?
Fatigue?

**Student Behavior**
Loud complaints about work (subjective behavior)

**Staff Behavior**
Send student to office (ODR)

**Student Consequence**
Student leaves class (Escapes social interaction)

**Staff Self-Review**
"Is this a vulnerable decision point?"

**Use Neutralizing Response**
"See me after class."

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What are the critical features of a good Neutralizing Routine?

- Interrupts the chain of events
- Instructional
- Brief
- Clear
- Emotionless
Sample #1 Neutralizing Routine

TRY

Take a deep breath
Reflect on your emotions
Youth’s best interest
Sample #2 Neutralizing Routine

STOP

S\text{top}

T\text{ake a step back}

O\text{bserve what's going on}

P\text{roceed mindfully}
Sample #3 Neutralizing Routine

**BRAT**

- **B**reathe
- **R**efocus
- **A**sk myself, *am I over-reacting?*
- **T**reat student respectfully
Closing Activity

“Implicit bias is perhaps the most **complex aspect** of the school-to-prison pipeline.”

BREAKING THE CHAINS
The School-To-Prison Pipeline, Implicit Bias, and Racial Trauma
September 2016
Thank You

ENJOY THE CONFERENCE

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