In the following report, Hanover Research investigates best practices in cultural competence and implicit bias training for K-12 school districts.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

In this report, Hanover Research investigates the subjects of cultural competence and unconscious bias training in an effort to assist schools and school districts in their mission to better serve and support all students and teachers. The body of this report consists of three sections:

- **Section I** describes the changing demographic landscape of the school-aged population in the United States and Virginia, with particular emphasis on the racial achievement gap in K-12 education.
- **Section II** addresses scholarly evidence for the effectiveness of competence building and bias reduction training with a subsection highlighting the impact of such efforts on measures of student achievement such as standardized test scores.
- **Section III** lays out a set of practices identified in scholarly and organizational literature as effective means to improve cultural competence and reduce bias. Hanover also draws upon examples of these theories in practice from three Virginia school districts: Arlington County Public Schools, Alexandria City Public Schools, and Albemarle County Public Schools.

Throughout this report, Hanover Research treats cultural competence and implicit bias training as interrelated but distinct concepts. Cultural competence originated with medical doctors’ difficulty in treating individuals from other social groups. In both professional and educational contexts, cultural competence implies the intentional creation of a system of institutional values supported by a framework of policies, training, and education that increases the achievement of minority groups and increases workplace efficiency for all.¹ In order to bring about this outcome, research suggests institutions must address the unconscious biases of their leaders and employees. Unconscious biases are stereotypes activated by interaction with a member of a stereotyped group. The person experiencing this bias does not intentionally will this feeling of dislike or distrust into existence, but feels it emerge based on cultural influences rather than personal beliefs.²

Below we present key findings from this research.

KEY FINDINGS

- Multiple studies found a positive, significant correlation between measures of student achievement and teachers’ belief in minority students’ prospects for success, awareness and use of community culture and values, and interaction with parents.
  - Teachers engaging in these behaviors saw their students’ classroom behavior improve and scores rise on standardized math and reading assessments. One study even found an increase in minority student IQ test scores.
  - While Hanover’s review of extant literature did not reveal any empirical research directly linking one particular training intervention with improved student achievement, the documented outcomes of interventions found do correlate to the aforementioned improvements in student-teacher relationships.

- Prolonged participation in cultural and bias awareness raising activities has been shown to correlate to a significant decrease in both implicit and explicit prejudice and bias.
  - Research suggests that an incremental approach to cultural competency training may lead to the greatest impact. Effective training should begin with securing participant buy-in, followed by building awareness of participants’ own biases, and concluding with discussions of stereotype breaking racial exemplars.

- Clearly articulating that implicit biases are acquired from environmental sources and not the personal fault of participants may improve the effectiveness of training and decrease the likelihood of discomfort of participants.
  - Allowing for a convenient channel of anonymous feedback, through a designated ombudsman, comment box, or blind survey, may also increase the efficacy of training.
  - Additionally, prior to curriculum development, program designers may also wish to engage in a survey of staff, parents, and students concerning experiences with racial and cultural issues in order to target training time.
SECTION I: MOTIVATIONS FOR CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND BIAS TRAINING

This section describes a series of factors that have led to the emergence of cultural competence and bias training in K-12 school districts across the United States. Drawing upon figures from the National Center for Education Statistics and the Virginia Department of Education, this section discusses shifts in the demographic composition of the school-aged population in Virginia and the United States as a whole, as well as the achievement gap that persists among minority students.

NATIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

Nationwide, the proportion of white and minority student populations in elementary and secondary schools have been moving in opposite directions (Figure 1.1). While in the year 2000 white students made up 61 percent of this population and minority students only 39 percent, U.S. schools had become “majority minority” by 2015. By 2020, the minority students are expected to outnumber their white counterparts by six percentage points across the entire K-12 education sectors.

Figure 1.1: White vs. Minority US Student Population (2000-2020)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

VIRGINIA DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

Demographic shifts in Virginia largely mirror the nation as a whole. Between the 2000-01 and 2012-13 school year, the white and minority composition of the state’s student body steadily grew closer to even (Figure 1.2). A significant cause of this shift is the increasing number of Hispanic students in the state, with the percentage the student body identifying as Hispanic more than doubling over this period (Figure 1.3). This increase represents an additional 101,886 students attending primary and secondary school in Virginia. Similarly, the Asian population also saw an increase, although by a more modest figure of 2 percent.

---

over the term. Interesting to note is that, in addition to a decrease in 9 percent in the white student population, the Black student population in Virginia decreased by 2 percent between 2000 and 2012.

**Figure 1.2 White vs. Minority Virginia Student Population (2000-2012)**

![Figure 1.2 White vs. Minority Virginia Student Population (2000-2012)](https://example.com/figure1.2.png)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

**Figure 1.3 Percent Change in Proportion of Virginia Students of Hispanic Descent (2000-2012)**

![Figure 1.3 Percent Change in Proportion of Virginia Students of Hispanic Descent (2000-2012)](https://example.com/figure1.3.png)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

**THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP**

Significant differences exist in the ways in which students from different racial and cultural groups interact with their school environments, which have been noted to manifest as socio-emotional, disciplinarily, and academic achievement gaps. Minority students are more often exposed to negative school environments, unsupportive teachers, destructive peer

---


5 Ibid.
norms, and mental health problems. What’s more, these same students often experience higher rates of disciplinary penalties than white students. Such experiences may result in students forming negative emotional attachments to the school environment that may, in turn, reduce their motivation to learn. Anti-academic peer norms may compound this issue, with the emotional stress and other mental health problems compounding the likelihood of negative student outcomes. These socio-emotional problems may contribute to the much higher rates of disciplinary action against minority students, particularly Black students.

In addition to these broad socio-emotional factors, the academic achievement gap between minority and white students may also relate in part to their relationships with their teachers. Teachers may unconsciously perceive these students as less equipped to learn than their mainstream peers due to a lack of language skills and preparation at home for learning in such content areas as reading and mathematics. Students may internalize these attitudes, even if they are only displayed through minor behaviors, and thus set low academic expectations for themselves. The internalization of these stereotypes may lead to lowered personal expectations for academic achievement.

**VIRGINIA’S ACHIEVEMENT GAP – SOL SCORES**

An examination of reading and math SOL scores reveals a substantial achievement gap for 4th and 8th Grade Black and Hispanic students in Virginia (Figure 1.4 and Figure 1.5). During the 2013-14 academic year, 21 percent fewer Hispanic students achieved a proficient or advanced proficient rating in reading than white students, and 27 percent fewer than Asian students. The gap then widened when this same cohort of students took their Grade 8 SOL.
A significant achievement gap still exists, albeit to a lesser extent, in SOL mathematics scores. In Grade 4, 12 percent fewer Hispanic students achieved a score qualifying as proficient or advanced proficient than white students, and 20 percent less than Asian students. The gap only increased between white and Hispanic students in Grade 8.

Failure to intervene and break this cycle may contribute to problems with student retention.

**STUDENT RETENTION**

Students’ lack of belief in their ability to achieve academic success may contribute to their dropping out of school. As dropping out often leads to poverty and incarceration, it is vital to seek to prevent this outcome. One means of redress may be to seek to alter cultural and racial bias in school systems, in order to improve student confidence, achievement, and

---


13 Ibid.

retention. This need is particularly great for Virginia’s Hispanic population, who are more than three times as likely to drop out of school as their white counterparts (Figure 1.5).

**Figure 1.5: Dropout Rates by Race (2009-10)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Virginia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

“Number and Percentage of 9th- to 12th-Graders Who Dropped out of Public Schools, by Race/ethnicity, Grade, and State or Jurisdiction: 2009-10.”
SECTION II: EVIDENCE FOR EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPETENCE AND BIAS TRAINING

Significant empirical evidence suggests that organizations can steer the development of cultural competency. This section provides a summary of the efficacy of cultural competence and implicit bias training, with an emphasis on the K-12 educational context.

ADJUSTING ATTITUDES

The first and most apparent barrier between teachers and culturally diverse students are the mistaken beliefs teachers may hold about students’ backgrounds and values. A study in North Carolina demonstrated that a single cultural diversity seminar, discussing topics such as intercultural communication and ethnic integration of extracurricular activities, did result in a change in teachers’ multicultural thinking, including a new willingness to examine scaffolding practices such as translating testing instruments into students’ native languages. However, experts are quick to note that the building of cultural competence, especially if it is to result in higher test scores and in-classroom performance for students, must consist of more than one-time workshops.

There is a significant body of research demonstrating that integrating practices from students’ home and background culture, such as relating the use of figurative language in literature to figurative language in insult-word games played by students, improves student classroom engagement. In the same vein, 12 separate studies endorse the approach that setting high expectations for African American students in a relational and personal environment (similar to an extended family) improves academic achievement.

IMPROVING ACHIEVEMENT

An investigation into six schools in the southeastern United States composed of primarily low income, Black students revealed a direct link between teacher confidence in students’ abilities and those students’ scores on standardized tests. Nine teacher belief statements were found to significantly correlate to student achievement on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, which measures ability in mathematics, reading, and language arts. Importantly, no single belief statement directly concerning culture, race, and ethnicity was correlated with achievement. However, the belief statements concerning communal responsibility for success, when combined with a belief in repetition and drilling, correlated consistently with success in reading. Teachers’ belief in allowing students to occasionally lead classroom

---

sessions, combined with a belief in every student’s ability to succeed, correlated most strongly with high mathematics scores (Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1: Teacher Belief Statements Positively and Significantly Correlated with Standardized Test Achievement by African American Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BELIEF</th>
<th>MATHEMATICS</th>
<th>READING</th>
<th>LANGUAGE ARTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“It is my job to disseminate knowledge to my students.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>r = .30</td>
<td>r = .37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“One student’s success is success for the whole class, and one student’s failure is failure for all of us.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>r = .35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Testing is an individual assessment; however, test results of an individual reflect on the group’s efforts toward helping the individual learn, as well.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>r = .35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My purpose for teaching is to give something back to the community in the same way I was given an education.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>r = .41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sometimes I play the role of student and allow students to teach the class.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>r = .36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“With enough repetition, drill, and practice, students will attain a passing grade.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>r = .36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Every student I encounter is successful at something.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>r = .29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Love & Kruger

Also important to note is that belief statements associated with teachers preconceived ideas of student ability, particularly when combined with a lack of contact with the parents of those students, correlates with lower scores in mathematics and reading, and to an even greater extent than the positive correlations discussed above. However, it is important to note that conscious attitudes comprise only part of teacher and administrator interactions with culturally diverse students. A large body of literature indicates unconscious biases influence behavior between such groups to a larger extent than many people may be aware.

**REDUCING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS**

Implicit biases develop automatically as a result of an individual’s interaction with an environment that displays biased ideas. Unconscious stereotypes, rather than conscious

---

19 Copied verbatim from source, Ibid.
21 Ibid.
beliefs, influence the decision making process. In the same way, ideas about and gender
groups can become entrenched in the minds of teachers, administrators, and students.22

**IMPLICIT ASSOCIATIONS AND STEREOTYPES**

A number of research projects have been conducted in attempts to ascertain the
effectiveness of interventions intended to reduce implicit biases. Interventions such as
keeping journals of incidents of personal bias, stereotype negation word association
exercises, and even brief sensitivity seminars have all been shown to have an impact on
implicit measures of bias towards racial and gender groups.23 These interventions ranged
from thirty minutes in duration to an entire academic semester; however, **researchers agreed that consistent practice is necessary to preserve the effects of training.**24 As might
be expected, the journaling intervention (which took place during a semester long class on
prejudice and intergroup conflict) had significant effect sizes on both implicit and explicit
biases (Figure 2.2).

![Figure 2.2 Effect Sizes of Seminar Intervention on Implicit and Explicit Prejudices and Stereotypes](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Implicit</th>
<th>Explicit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice</td>
<td>d = .74</td>
<td>d = .47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype</td>
<td>d = .86</td>
<td>d = .91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rudman et al.25

However, even a thirty minute sensitivity session has been shown to have some statistically
significant effect on the implicit biases and stereotype activation of male scientists towards
their female colleagues, as measured by personalized implicit association tests.26 Reduction
in stereotype activation is particularly important because stereotypes have been found to
reduce the working memory capacity of students, particularly in high stakes testing
scenarios.27 The landmark “Pygmalion” study demonstrated that teachers’ expectations of

---


   article/unconscious-bias

   http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/psp/78/5/871/

   http://doi.apa.org/getdoi.cfm?doi=10.1037/0022-3514.81.5.856

   http://search.proquest.com/docview/1563008980/F2A06503EE694B05PQ/2?accountid=132487


   3514.85.3.440
students’ intelligence (established by being told a student was a “bloomer”) has a significant effect upon student performance on IQ tests. This same study also found that students from minority groups benefited more than mainstream students, particularly those students with a strongly ethnic appearance.28

Interestingly, empirical research has shown that the converse is also true. Studies have shown evidence that Black students’ test scores on exams indicative of their personal aptitude decrease when they are asked to identify their race prior to beginning an exam (Figure 2.3). Researchers theorize that this encounter with a racial identifier while taking a test linked to personal intelligence primes students to remember negative stereotypes about their race’s perceived intelligence. This perception causes a stress reaction that, in turn, may result in a decrease in active working memory.29 While this reaction is unconscious, the effect can transform minority students’ beliefs about their own self-worth. Black students asked to accept or reject a series of positive and negative predictions about themselves accepted negative predictions at a higher rate than white students.30

---

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
SECTION III: APPROACHES TO COMPETENCY AND BIAS REDUCTION TRAINING

Two theoretical models dominated Hanover Research’s review of relevant literature and practices on cultural competency and bias reduction training: Mason’s Model of Cultural Competency and Pederson’s Framework for Developing Cross-Cultural Competency. According to these theoretical models, Hanover Research aggregated practices and strategies from scholarly and organizational literature and compiled examples of their use in three school districts in Virginia: Arlington County Public Schools, Alexandria City Public Schools, and Albemarle County Public Schools.

MASON’S MODEL OF CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN THE CLASSROOM

One model of cultural competency sees teachers and staff as operating on a continuum of cultural competency achieved incrementally through five stages (Figure 3.1). Employees gradually move from a “destructive” state in which the importance of multiculturalism in the classroom is denied, to a state of “incapacity” in which individuals neither support nor condemn cultural differences, to a state of “blindness” in which the individual accepts the existence of cultural differences, but believes them to be inconsequential for learning. The final two “pre-competence” and “competence” stages see the teacher or staff member alter practices to respond to cultural differences, culminating in an individual (and ultimately an organization) that celebrates, encourages, and responds to them.\(^\text{32}\)

![Figure 3.1: Mason’s Model of Cultural Competency](source: Arlington County Public Schools\(^\text{33}\))

Certain practices may help institutions and their staff move more quickly through the stages of competency.


\(^{33}\) [1] Ibid.

CULTURALLY COMPETENT TEACHING PRACTICES

Generally, the goal of cultural competency training is to allow diverse groups of people to work together effectively in a workplace environment.  However, teacher-pupil relationships differ from the manager-employee relationships most frequently discussed in the literature. In the classroom setting, teachers seek to better understand their students’ backgrounds so as to better target instructional activities towards students’ strengths. This targeted instruction has been seen to improve student learning outcomes.

For instance, studies have consistently suggested that Black students function better in teacher-student relationships similar to those encountered in an extended family. Other studies have shown that certain teaching practices, such as scaffolding, combined with the strategic expectation setting of the Zones of Proximal Development, help establish a clear understanding of both teachers and students capabilities, thus improving teachers’ classroom management experience and student performance outcomes.

Figure 3.2: Model of Culturally Competent Teaching Practices

| Scaffolding | • Teachers use elements of students' culture in the classroom. For example, allowing students to read a book for a literature class in their native language while the teacher still lectures in English. |
| Zones of Proximal Development | • Teachers set tasks at higher levels than students believe achievable, then uses scaffolds to promote student success. Students’ successful progression through ZPDs provides cognitive evidence to teachers of the possibility of success for students from minority cultures. |
| Improved Outcomes | • Most importantly, such activities also demonstrate to students their own capability and that their teacher believes in their capabilities as well. This improved relationship may lead to improved academic performance. |

Source: National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

---

36 Ibid, p. 5.
THEORY IN PRACTICE: ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (ACPS)

ACPS built upon ideas such as scaffolding, zones of proximal development, and outcome based lesson planning to develop its own learning and teaching model for cultural competency (Figure 3.3). 38

Figure 3.3: ACPS Framework and Building Blocks for Cultural Responsiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content: Using End-In-Mind Design to enhance learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage One: Desired Results</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emphasize goals and essential questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clearly articulate process and outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Two: Assessment Evidence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use Balanced Assessment to Help Students Self-Monitor and Self-Asses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Three: Learning Plans</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Frame learning around essential questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create an open &quot;no secrets&quot; environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instruction: Promoting an inclusive learning community through a focus on <em>The Skillful Teacher Pedagogy</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management Areas:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attention Moves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Space Arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional Areas:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clarifying Concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attention to Principles of Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communicating and Reinforce high expectations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships: Emphasizing Ron Ferguson’s &quot;7 C's&quot; to promote a collaborative and engaged classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caring:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Believe in students, stand in their shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controlling:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Keep students on task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarifying:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explain, reexplain, monitor and revist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenging:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demand full effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Captivating:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relate content to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conferring:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Act upon student feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consolidating:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Summarize content and link to learning objectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Alexandria City Public Schools

PEDERSEN’S FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Psychologist Paul Pedersen initially developed a model for achieving cultural competence to fill a need in the medical professions, in which ailments were being misdiagnosed and patients mistreated as a result of an inability to communicate between doctors and patients. However, this model has been adapted to the classroom setting. It progresses through three simple stages of awareness, knowledge and skills. Each stage must be completed before passing to the next stage, as skills are dependent upon knowledge, and knowledge is dependent upon awareness.

**Figure 3.4: Pedersen’s Framework for Cross-Cultural Competency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Awareness</strong></th>
<th><strong>Knowledge</strong></th>
<th><strong>Skills</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-reflection on source of attitudes and biases, impact of biases on students, and strategies to eliminate bias.</td>
<td>Significant understanding of the cultures from which students arrive to the classroom.</td>
<td>Teachers and administrators must adapt to the needs of student populations through professional development or hiring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactic(s): Use questionnaires such as the Diversity Awareness Profile and checklists to operationalize remedies.</td>
<td>Tactic(s): In the case of Spanish speaking students, teachers and staff must build awareness of the differences in culture between various countries considered &quot;Hispanic&quot; or &quot;Latino&quot;.</td>
<td>Tactic(s): Establish English classes for parents, correspond with families in Spanish, elicit input from families on student learning objectives, hire a Spanish-speaking school receptionist, hire a bilingual teacher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Arlington Public Schools

When considering frameworks of such broad theoretical scope practical examples may help those seeking to establish their own programs more clearly visualize its components.

---

**THEORY IN PRACTICE: ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

In 2009, the Arlington (Virginia) County Public School District undertook the Cultural Competence Initiative – an effort to bridge the achievement test score gap between Black and Latino students as compared to white students. The initiative produced a Cultural Competence Curriculum (CCC) that was largely inspired by the Pedersen Framework.40

**FIVE TASKS AND STAGES OF CLASSROOM SOCIAL AND INTELLECTUAL ENGAGEMENT**

Dr. Ronald F. Ferguson, a contributor to the CCC, describes five core tasks that teachers need to understand and execute in order to build cultural competency and ultimately student success.41 These tasks are largely set up as dichotomies between consequences of culturally competent teaching and culturally incompetent teaching. For instance:

- **Task One: Building Trust and Interest vs. Mistrust and Disinterest**
  - The teacher fosters in students a sense of trust and interest and a feeling of positive anticipation.

- **Task Two: Balancing Teacher Control vs. Student Autonomy**
  - The teacher and students seek and find an appropriate balance of teacher control and student autonomy through mutual testing and responses.

- **Task Three: Creating Ambitiousness vs. Ambivalence**
  - The teacher helps each student and collaborates with him or her to commit to ambitious learning goals and to overcome ambivalence by either party.

- **Task Four: Building Industriousness vs. Discouragement**
  - The teacher and students work industriously to achieve goals for learning and to overcome any discouragement due to setbacks.

- **Task Five: Fostering Consolidation vs. Irresolution and Disconnection.**
  - The teacher helps students to consolidate their learnings and to connect goals and learnings forward in anticipation of future classes and life experiences.

A classroom ready version of the tasks can be viewed in the CCC.42

---

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid, p. 171.
42 Copied Verbatim from Source. Ibid, p. 173.
THE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHER CHECKLIST

The checklist adds literacy to the five core tasks and offers research-based, culturally competent behaviors that have been shown to have a demonstrable impact on student achievement. Teachers rate themselves according to a scale of “Not Evident,” “Emerging,” “Operational,” and “Highly Functional,” listing specific evidence for each rating.43 A sample section of the checklist is provided below, with the full document available in the CCC.

Figure 3.5: Culturally Responsive Teacher Checklist – Core Elements of Literacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORE TASK</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I move from students’ conversational contexts of vocabulary to academic</td>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>Today I used students’ discussion of their trip to school to begin our</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contexts.</td>
<td></td>
<td>transportation vocabulary unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use personal stories.</td>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>I explained one vocabulary word using a brief personal commuting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>anecdote as an example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use journal writing.</td>
<td>Not Evident</td>
<td>Did not do today. Tomorrow, I will have students then write about their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>trips to school, in English, for 15 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I explain the language and meaning before introducing concepts.</td>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>I explained the different modes of transportation—bus, walking, and car—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>before students offered their own stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I explain concepts in language that students can understand.</td>
<td>Highly</td>
<td>I explained the above vocabulary in Spanish when students evidenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>lack of comprehension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: Arlington Public Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While such tools and techniques help teachers reach students from different social groups, they are only effective insofar as the teacher is aware of their need for the tools. As such, these practices are best when paired with training that helps teachers identify and reduce their own unconscious biases.

STRATEGIES FOR UNCONSCIOUS BIAS REDUCTION TRAINING

Research focusing on the effects of situational power on the activation of Caucasian women’s automatic racial biases shows that when put in a position of power these biases arise more often.44 This finding holds particular import for the teaching profession, many of whose practitioners are white women.45 As such, all teachers willing to consider that unconscious bias may, despite their best intentions, impact the experiences of minority students in their classrooms will want to consider strategies for reducing implicit bias before it becomes a problem.

Drawing upon scholarly literature and practical examples from the field, Hanover Research has developed the framework for an implicit bias reduction strategy (Figure 3.6). This strategy moves from the introduction of the concept of implicit bias, to confronting and altering racial stereotypes, and finally to racially and culturally integrating the school environment. A study of a similar training program found that measures of implicit bias decreased in relation to participant use of these strategies. What’s more, the effects persisted at repeated measurement points 4, 8, and 12 weeks after the intervention.46

Figure 3.6: Comprehensive Strategy for Long-Term Reduction in Implicit Bias

---


SECURING BUY-IN

While research has consistently shown these strategies to be effective in reducing implicit bias, convincing stakeholders of the importance of implicit bias is a vital foundation for this training.

OBSTACLES TO BUY-IN

Diversity practitioners are often concerned about causing discomfort to participants that may result in the reinforcement of stereotypes rather than in their reduction. Other diversity practitioners have called sensitivity training insulting to minority groups as inherent in the conversation is the assumption of minority fragility, inadequacy, and irresponsibility. These professionals fear that improperly conducted training can increase social distance between racial groups in the workplace, rather than creating mutual understanding that leads to an improved performance of job duties.

However, participants need not start with this belief. Prior studies have found that establishing buy-in within a two week period of beginning the training program is sufficient. Means by which to secure this belief and concern are simple and direct. Beginning a cultural competence and bias reduction program with a presentation of evidence on their existence and a clear articulation of goals and the link between exercises and those goals may help avoid such negative outcomes. Allowing for anonymous feedback at regular intervals throughout the training program may also establish a safe avenue to provide crucial information that can avoid creating a more polarized workplace environment.

PRESENTATION OF EVIDENCE – RESEARCH, BIAS JOURNALS, AND EXPERIENCE SHARING

As the notion of implicit bias can be particularly difficult to accept, a presentation of research findings may help training participants to open their minds. A study of strategies to reduce the implicit biases of male scientists towards women in the STEM field may apply to dynamics between racial groups. Researchers found that a thirty-minute seminar discussing the effect of implicit bias on hiring, promotion, retention, and strategies to overcome bias temporarily reduced males’ Implicit Association Test (IAT) scores (see below). Once participants have become open to the possibility of implicit bias affecting their behavior, the

---


keeping of a bias-journal over a period of weeks has been shown to increase awareness of implicit bias.  

In these journals, participants record biased events which they witness, but also biased feelings, words, and deeds of their own. As research indicates that the presence of a person from a stereotyped group reduced the implicit biases of those outside that group, program designers may wish to consider asking a person of the racial group towards which they are most interested in building understanding and reducing bias speak at or even lead the training sessions, particularly if they have suffered discrimination. Interaction with such a person, particularly if they have also had a positive experience in a culturally competent and bias free environment, may provide a strong emotional motivator for teachers and staff beginning training. Once sufficient buy-in has been secured, those conducting the training may move into an element of training likely to be controversial amongst trainees – the Implicit Association Test.

IDENTIFYING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS - THE IMPLICIT ASSOCIATION TEST

Training to correct unconscious biases must begin with their identification. In conjunction with the keeping of a bias journal, the Implicit Association Test may help participants gain awareness of their unconscious biases. A review of 122 research reports found that the IAT, a free online tool, predicts interracial and intergroup behavior significantly better than self-reported measures of racial attitudes. Its use at the beginning and end of a cultural competence and or bias reduction training program provides a pre- and post-test framework that gives participants a concrete indicator of the effectiveness of their efforts.

The general notion that unconscious cognition significantly influences human behavior began with Freud, with documentation growing up until the present day. However, as the notion that a person is less in control of their behavior than they would like to believe is generally unpopular, particular strategies have emerged that pursue a proactive attitude towards correcting bias. That is, strategies that focus on behaviors on which people can improve, rather than on seeking to assign blame for something that is beyond the control of the individual. Once participants feel sufficiently motivated to overcome their implicit biases, the training can move to corrective actions.

---

STEREOTYPE ALTERATION

Exposure to images of positive representatives of a racial or cultural group prone to receiving bias, coupled with a discussion of the attributes that make that person exemplary, has been shown to reduce implicit bias by working at a conscious and emotional level. This activity allows participants to experience, internalize, and feel that negative stereotypes do not hold for all individuals. For instance, viewing an image of Caesar Chavez or Martin Luther King, Jr. helps to break negative associations an individual may have with Hispanic and Black persons. In the same way, exposure to images of a disreputable white person has a similar effect in the opposite direction. Research has shown that discussing white serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer and his crimes reduced white participants’ preference for white individuals on the IAT, at least temporarily.

A similar activity involves participants being presented with images of stereotyped groups, paired with either a stereotypical or positive statement. Participants then accept or reject the statement, providing reasons for their decision. Program designers may wish to consider means to ensure high levels of participation. Research has found cold-calling to be an effective practice; however, in a sensitive situation such as bias training program designers and session leaders ought to proceed with caution. Leaders should pay particular attention to the context in which this activity is conducted in order to avoid participants feeling subject to reverse-racism. Again, providing a convenient means for the sharing of both in-person and anonymous feedback is key. In addition to training participants in these skills, program designers and administrators must integrate efforts into the culture of the workplace.

---


58 Ibid.


ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATION AND FEEDBACK SOLICITATION

Administrators and managers must not place the onus for change entirely upon subordinates. Instead, key district- and school-level leaders must make an attempt to align these factors with the overall goal of increasing cultural competency and reducing bias. However, underlying the notion of alignment is sufficient information on which to base choices. In order to see tangible results, administrators must solicit feedback from all employees on the racial and cultural atmosphere in which they work. Anonymous surveys of all employees, including former employees help to set agendas of change and to measure their effectiveness. Once a feedback based agenda is constructed, training opportunities can be tailored to the needs and concerns of employees and staff.

In addition to questions on broad perceptions of a workplace’s racial climate, survey designers may consider targeting questions to such concrete policy areas the recruitment and hiring processes, as well as onboarding, project assignment, mentoring, performance evaluation, promotion, and termination processes and practices. Offering ongoing opportunities for sharing anonymous feedback, either through comment boxes, a designated ombudsman, or links to anonymous surveys on institutional websites, is important as well. Finally, employing similar strategies to individual stereotype breaking, the inclusion of images and stories on high achieving members of minority groups in company newsletters, and even in posters and art displayed in the school or office environment, may help to break implicit stereotypes. As these stereotypes are socially acquired and socially constructed (often influenced by mass media) it is important to take advantage of the social sphere in order to correct them.

IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Per Hanover’s review of literature on this topic, no scholars or other organizations have set out to measure the impact on student achievement following teachers and other staff members undergoing a bias reduction training program. However, as literature does exist documenting the link between explicit teacher attitudes, relationships with parents, and student-teacher relationships with student achievement, it is plausible that a reduction in implicit bias would improve student achievement by way of making these relationships easier for teachers to form. Albemarle County Public Schools provides an example of a real life way to implement this approach.

---

62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
THEORY IN PRACTICE: ALBEMARLE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (ACPS)

ACPS operates a multi-pronged effort to increase cultural competence in their schools. Through their Office of Community Engagement, the district manages a team of diversity resource teachers, operates a culturally focused “artist-in-residence” program, and brings community members from various racial and cultural backgrounds into elementary school classrooms to serve as “cultural ambassadors” (Figure 3.7).64

Each school in the district has a diversity resource teacher that takes responsibility for planning and executing cultural competence workshops and training activities. Readers may view a detailed list of activities with accompanying documents at the link below.65 Artists-in-residence (specializing in everything from songwriting to West African Dance) visit student at various schools in order to broaden their cultural horizons and break stereotypes. For a similar reason, cultural community ambassadors, representatives of various racial and ethnic backgrounds visit elementary school students to read multicultural picture books and conduct accompanying awareness building discussions and activities.66 This program helps students see through stereotypes and accompanying activities help to bridge cultural divides and build cultural awareness.

Figure 3.7: Cultural Outreach Activities in Albemarle County Public Schools

Diversity resource teachers build capacity in schools throughout the district.

Artists such as William "Whit" Whitten seeks to use his skills in traditional African dance and drumming to "build bridges and create harmony within homes, schools, and communities."

Elementary school students listen to such tales as "The Story of Ruby Bridges," an early participant in school desegregation, before answering big picture questions on themes within the story.

Source: Albemarle County Public Schools67

64 “Equity and Diversity.” Albemarle County Public Schools. http://www2.k12albemarle.org/dept/instruction/comengage/eqdiv/Pages/default.aspx
65 “Diversity Resource Teacher Resources.” Albemarle County Public Schools. http://www2.k12albemarle.org/dept/instruction/comengage/eqdiv/DRTs/Pages/DRT_Resources.aspx
67 Ibid.
FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Those embarking upon the development of a cultural competency and bias reduction training program must keep in mind the difficulty of such a process, but also of the value of staying the course. Initial hesitancy on the part of participants and other stakeholders may complicate the effort, resulting in the temptation to carry out only brief sensitivity seminars instead of a comprehensive training course. If program designers seek to meet the goal of creating a more equitable classroom, then persistence will be required. Neal Goodman, expert on cultural intelligence and inclusion, reminds us that it “has taken a lifetime to develop our biases; they cannot be overcome in a two-hour session.”68

PROJECT EVALUATION FORM

Hanover Research is committed to providing a work product that meets or exceeds partner expectations. In keeping with that goal, we would like to hear your opinions regarding our reports. Feedback is critically important and serves as the strongest mechanism by which we tailor our research to your organization. When you have had a chance to evaluate this report, please take a moment to fill out the following questionnaire.


CAVEAT

The publisher and authors have used their best efforts in preparing this brief. The publisher and authors make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this brief and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of fitness for a particular purpose. There are no warranties that extend beyond the descriptions contained in this paragraph. No warranty may be created or extended by representatives of Hanover Research or its marketing materials. The accuracy and completeness of the information provided herein and the opinions stated herein are not guaranteed or warranted to produce any particular results, and the advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for every partner. Neither the publisher nor the authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages. Moreover, Hanover Research is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. Partners requiring such services are advised to consult an appropriate professional.