

Anti-Racism Practices for Early Childhood Environments

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Identity First



- I am a Puerto Rican cis-gender woman with white passing privilege, invisible disabilities and 32 years of sobriety sitting in Denver on what was once Arapahoe land.
- After 30+ years teaching young children, I now teach future & current early childhood educators

Please, type in the chat box your name – position/job/early childhood identity – anything else you want us to know about what brings you to this session.




The Deep End!

Agenda:

- **What Is Anti-Racism?**
- **In ECE**
- **Strategies**

Stopping for questions – but please
use the chat as we go



If this presentation causes you stress...

Put on your oxygen mask first

Turn off your camera

Take deep breaths

Color/doodle

Drink water

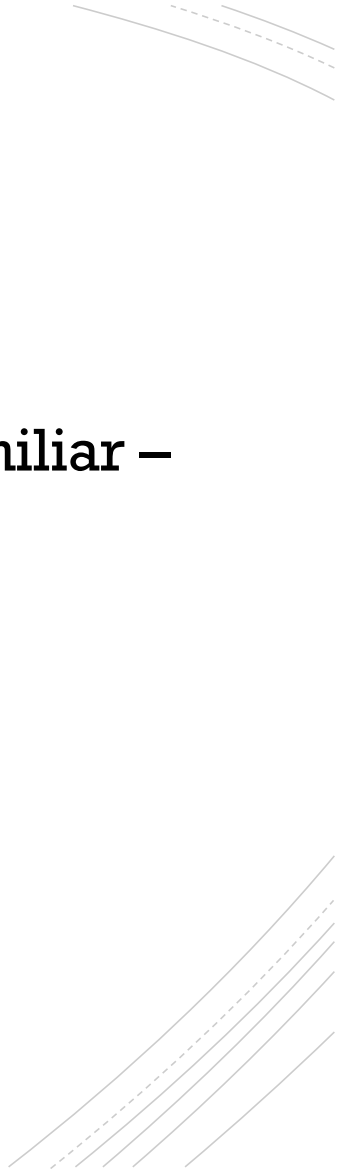
Pay attention to yourself

Step away (but come back if you can)

Let's start with a visualization....



Examining our Biases

- **Amygdala reacts to the unfamiliar – we can't change that**
 - **What we can do is make the unfamiliar more familiar.**
- 

What is Anti-Racism ?

- 1st, Let's agree on what Racism is –
- We like to think that Racism is those shocking explicit behaviors like wearing a headdress or blackface to a party – but that is just part of it.
- According to Ibram X Kendi - in his book How to Be an Antiracist -
- Racism is any;
 - Behaviors
 - Policies
 - Ideas
 - Actions or Inactions that:
 - Result in
 - Sustain or
 - Normalize

Racial Inequities.

“Black people **looting** for food, while white people **find** food”!



AP Associated Press AP - Tue Aug 30, 11:31 AM ET

A young man walks through chest-deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it

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★★★★★



AP 3:47 AM ET

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after looting bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana (AP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)

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RELATED

• Katrina's Effects, at a Glance AP - Tue Aug 30, 1:26 PM ET

[Hurricanes & Tropical Storms](#)

The background features several concentric circles in light gray, some solid and some dashed, creating a ripple effect. A large, light gray speech bubble is centered on the page, containing the text.

Racism is not who you are!

It is what you do – or fail to do.

The background of the slide features several thin, curved lines in light gray and blue, some solid and some dashed, creating a sense of movement and depth. A light gray rectangular box with a speech bubble tail at the bottom is positioned on the left side.

What is Anti-Racism ?

- Racism is sustaining, promoting, or creating inequity through behavior, policy and action, or **inaction**, it is not neutral.
- Anti-Racism is **actively** supporting and promoting racial equity in behaviors, policy, & ideas.
- There is no longer space for claiming “non-racism” – we must work against racism, or by our inaction we promote racism.
- **The essence of Anti-Racism is ACTION.**



The background features a series of concentric circles and curved lines in light gray, some solid and some dashed, creating a sense of depth and movement. A large, light gray rectangular box with a small triangular pointer at the bottom center is positioned in the middle of the slide.

Anti-Racism in ECE?

What would that look like?

University of California - 2014



- Phillip Goff had both university students and police officers look at pictures of 10 year old boys and determine how guilty they might be of various crimes – found that they were far more likely to believe that black boys were less innocent than white boys – also found that they estimated the ages of black boys to be 4.5 years older than they actually were.
- Important because – We see some children as older or more mature and more culpable for errors in judgement than others.

Harvard School Of Public Health – 2018



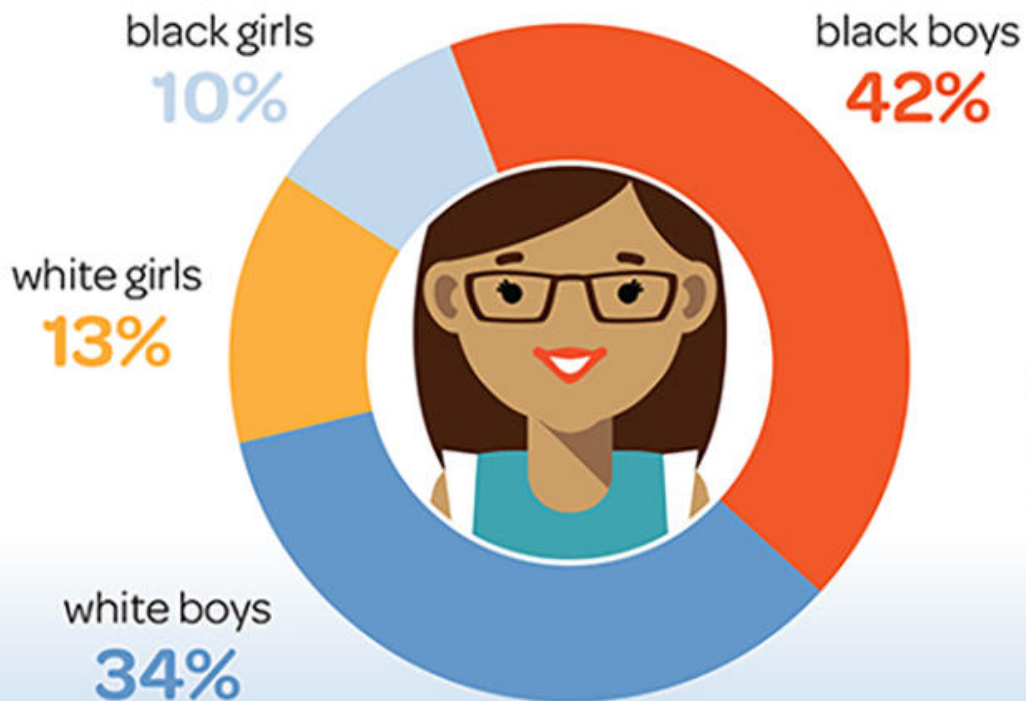
- Naomi Priest assessed the degree to which people who volunteer or work with children hold various stereotypes about different racial & ethnic groups – found that all groups (except Asian) are seen as more lazy, violence prone, unhealthy, and unintelligent than white people – and 1-5 respondents saw Hispanics as less intelligent than whites.
- Important because – this study was done with caregivers and volunteers working with children – and because these biases were conscious.

Yale Child Study Center – 2016



- Walter Gilliam studied the eye movements of preschool teachers told to observe a video for “challenging behaviors” – found that teachers of every race tracked the black boys most, and identified more problems (none were actually present).
- Important because – We see what we are looking for, and we have biases that tell us what to expect to see from certain children.

Track the eyes: Which students are teachers watching?



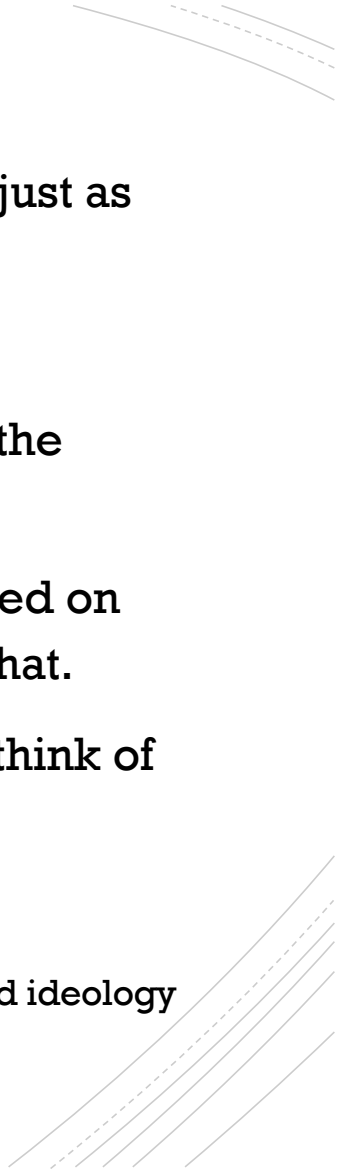
Preschool teachers tend to more closely observe blacks than whites, especially black boys, when challenging behaviors are expected.

By kindergarten entry, many children have been labeled and sorted into categories according to behavior, which has negative effects on children's self-worth, their perception of school as being safe and supportive, and is directly related to chronic absenteeism and suspension.

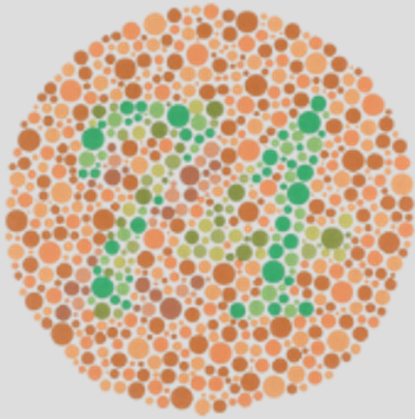
Center for Social and Emotional Education and Education Commission of the States, 2007



You might be
thinking:

- I don't look at children as their color, just as my students.
 - I love all my children the same.
 - I teach my students to love everyone the same.
 - My children don't see each other based on color and I don't want to teach them that.
 - I am a person of color myself, I don't think of people this way.
-
- All of these thoughts are evidence of a colorblind ideology
- 

Color blind Ideology



- Many of us were raised to judge a person by the content of their character – not by the color of their skin.
- We were taught to ignore color and that it might be a sign of racism if we were to focus on or talk about a person's skin color.
 - Colorblindness actually prevents us from thinking critically about race.
 - It allows us to avoid talking about racial inequity in schools.
 - It does not make space to see someone else's reality and undervalues their lived experience in the world.
 - Colorblindness actually leads to more biases
- (Others of us were taught to judge others by the shade of their skin – which is colorism.)

“Reform” can’t fix it

**The educational system
works exactly as it was
designed to work.**

- In her book We Want to Do More Than Survive, Bettina Love calls this work Abolitionist teaching. It is in fact, Anti- racism in education.
- “No type of pedagogy, however effective, can single-handedly remove the barriers of racism, discrimination, homophobia, segregation, Islamophobia, homelessness, access to college and concentrated poverty.”
- Education systems maintain gaps, measure gaps, ensure that there are gaps because they were designed within a system that centers whiteness at the expense of others.



Designed to “fix”
Black Children

- The ECE programs that came out of the “war on Poverty” in the 1960’s were designed to improve the IQ’s of disadvantaged children – to make up for the poor parenting they received – to teach socially acceptable behaviors to unruly children from impoverished homes. (Jackson, 2018; Derman-Sparks, 2016)



Can We Agree?

- Implicit Biases show up as Racism in our classrooms (Gilliam, 2016)
- Colorblindness shows up as Racism in our classrooms (Priest, 2018; Spring, 2016; Howard, 2020)
- The systems created to measure, monitor, rate and improve quality are all grounded in racism (Love, 2019)
- If racism is already there – we must **act** to irradiate it or we are **complicit** (we are practicing racism).



We are either actively fighting - or passively supporting racism.

So What Can We DO?

Learn about yourself!

Talk about Race!

Stop making assumptions!

Ask your program to do an equity audit!

Educate yourself!

Learn from people of other races!

Make time to reflect!

Practice Visualizations!

Cultural Awareness Exercise

Try listing all the cultures and identities you have: (This is just a list of suggestions to get you started. Add as many as you think describe you.)

What is your:

Religion
Nationality
Race
Sexual identity
Ethnicity
Occupation
Marital status
Age
Geographic region

Are you:

A female
A male
Disabled
From an urban area
From a rural area
A parent
A student

Have you ever been:

In the military
Poor
In prison
Wealthy
In the middle class
In the working class

They're not too young to talk about race!



At birth, babies look equally at faces of all races. At 3 months, babies look more at faces that match the race of their caregivers. (Kelly et al. 2005)

Children as young as two years use race to reason about people's behaviors. (Hirschfeld, 2008)

By 30 months, most children use race to choose playmates. (Katz & Kofkin, 1997)

Expressions of racial prejudice often peak at ages 4 and 5. (Aboud, 2008)

By five, Black and Latinx children in research settings show no preference toward their own groups compared to Whites; White children at this age remain strongly biased in favor of whiteness. (Dunham et al, 2008)

By kindergarten, children show many of the same racial attitudes that adults in our culture hold—they have already learned to associate some groups with higher status than others. (Kinzler, 2016)

Explicit conversations with 5–7 year olds about interracial friendship can dramatically improve their racial attitudes in as little as a single week. (Bronson & Merryman, 2009)

Young children notice and think about race. Adults often worry that talking about race will encourage racial bias in children, but the opposite is true. **Silence about race reinforces racism** by letting children draw their own conclusions based on what they see. Teachers and families can play a powerful role in helping children of all ages develop positive attitudes about race and diversity and skills to promote a more just future—but only if we talk about it!

Do some learning of your own to get ready for conversations with children. Here are some good places to seek *information* and *training*:

- Teaching Tolerance — tolerance.org
- Raising Race Conscious Children — raceconscious.org
- Embrace Race — embracepace.org
- Teaching for Change — teachingforchange.org
- AORTA Cooperative — aorta.coop
- Fortify Community Health (CA) — fortifycommunityhealth@gmail.com
- Delaware Valley Assoc. for the Education of Young Children (PA) — dvaeyc.org



© 2018 • Updated Feb 28 2018
The Children's Community School
1212 South 47th Street, Philadelphia PA 19143
childrenscommunityschool.org



Normalize the
conversation



Challenge your Assumptions

Black boys are NOT more aggressive
Black girls are NOT more sassy, angry, loud
Families DO care about their children
YOUR rules are NOT the only right way to do school
You CAN learn to pronounce that name
Children who disagree with you are NOT defiant
You do NOT need to sort children by gender
Not ALL homes have two parents





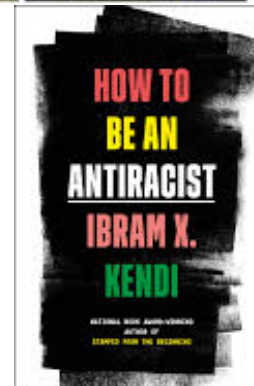
DEI Statements?

Or
Equity Audits?

- Remember that Anti-Racism is about what you DO not what you profess to believe.
- **TAKE ACTION!**
- <https://maec.org/res/tools/>

READ

Learn more about what you don't
understand so you can ACT



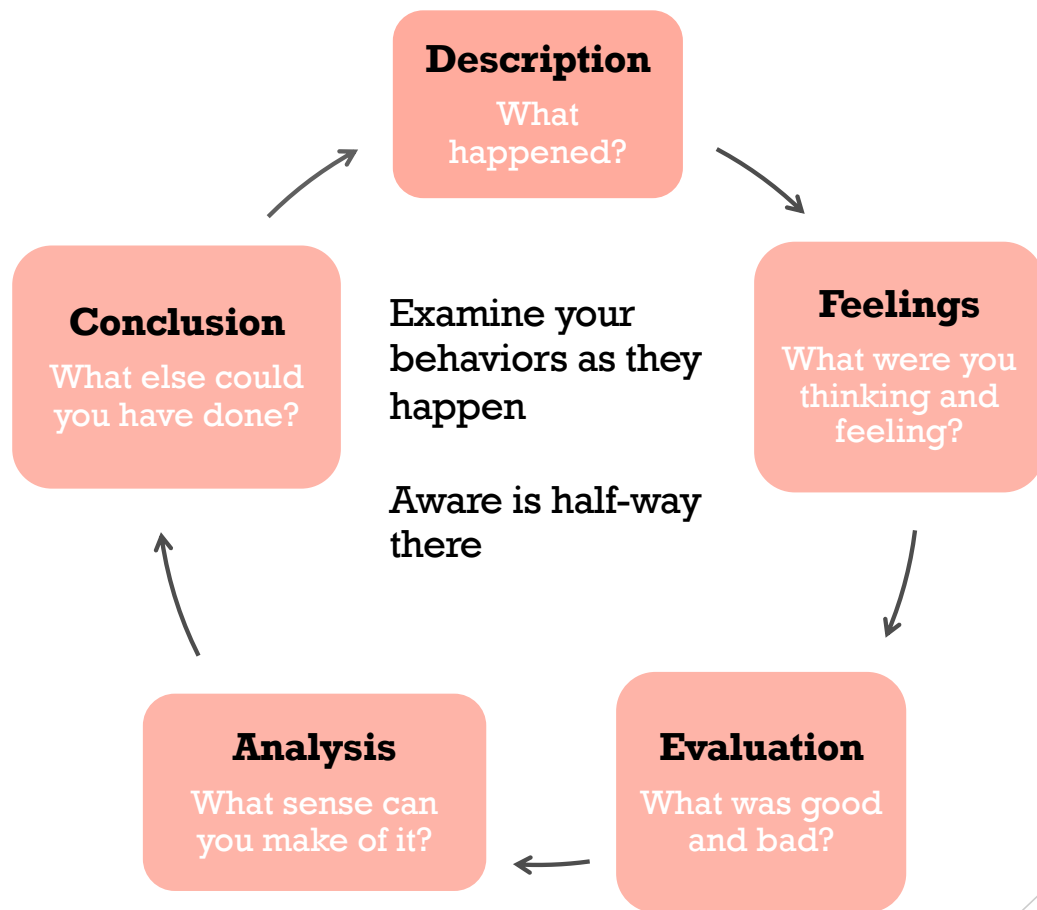
Reflect

On what you did

What you said

What you didn't do

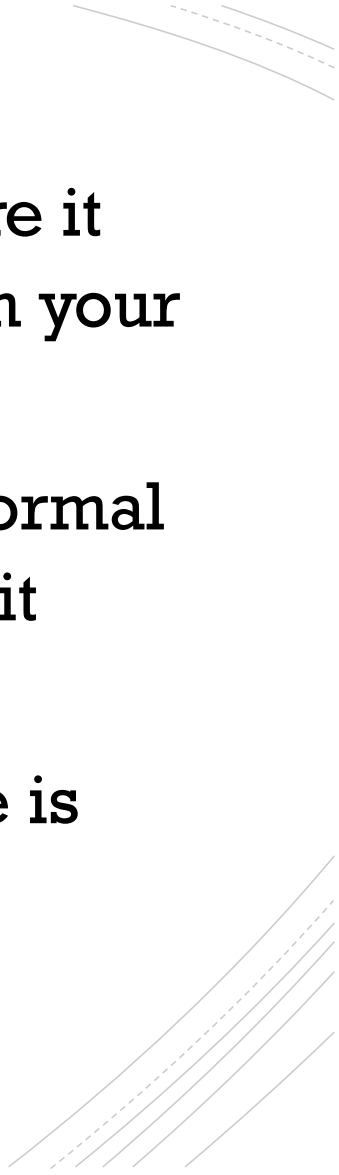
What you didn't say





Visualization

Close your eyes

- Visualize a situation before it happens, then change it in your mind.
 - Expose yourself to new normal
– Normalize it by making it expected.
 - Just remember that Aware is Only half-way there
 - The rest is up to you.
- 



Resources

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