

# Understanding Culture and Bias for Paraprofessionals

Presented by  
Project SUCCESS

August 26, 2020



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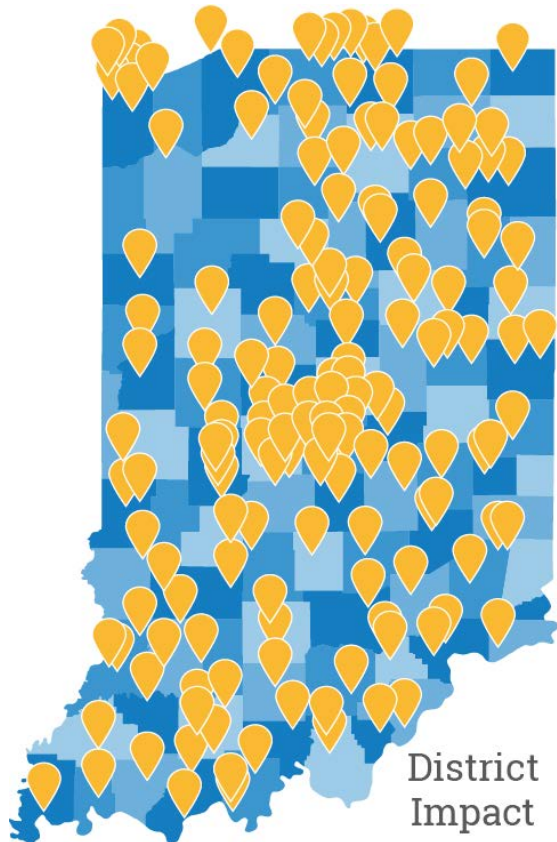
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# Project SUCCESS

Project **SUCCESS** supports districts to ensure that students with significant intellectual disabilities achieve increasingly higher academic outcomes and leave high school ready for post-secondary options by providing ongoing and job-embedded professional development focused on academic instruction, communication, and employability skills.

Topics Frequently Covered:	Unpacking Standards	Curriculum Mapping	Goal Writing	Formative Assessment	Certificate of Completion
	Types of Support:	On-site FD	Summer Institutes	Webinars	State/National Conferences



**441** participants at our 2019 Regional Trainings

**11** schools selected as 2019-2020 Model Sites

**32,515** views/downloads of Content Connector resources

**36,112**

**8,987** Attend or view webinars

views/downloads of curriculum and instructional resources

“As a result of partnering with Project SUCCESS, my students are achieving at a much higher level as I am providing access and exposure to grade-level content connectors and curriculum.”

# Session Overview

Understanding Culture & Bias

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# Pre-Webinar Assessment

Rate yourself on each of the following statements:

- I understand how culture influences student behavior, communication, and attitudes toward learning.
- I understand the types of bias that can exist, as well the factors that contribute to bias.
- I understand how bias contributes to my pre-conceived notions about and influences my interactions with students.
- I have strategies and effective practices to support students with diverse backgrounds.
- I know how to support a culturally responsive learning environment as a paraprofessional.



"We must *teach* the way students *learn*...

...rather than expecting them to *learn* the way we *teach*."

Dr. Pedro Noguera, Director of the Center for the Transformation of Schools at UCLA

# Today's Objectives

Paraprofessionals who participate in this webinar will:

1. Gain a better understanding of culture and how it influences behavior.
2. Explore personal cultural identity.
3. Explore ways to identify personal bias(es).
4. Examine the influence of bias on interactions with students.
5. Introduce framework for culturally responsive teaching.

# Section I: Understanding Culture

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# Checking for Understanding

How could understanding culture benefit you in your role as a paraprofessional?

How might it benefit your students?

# Section Overview

## Why is culture important? Culture helps us to:

- ▶ Provide an environment in which all children can safely learn and grow.
- ▶ Respond to diverse student needs

## *Culturally responsive strategies*

- ▶ Teaching practices that promote learning for all students,
- ▶ Inclusive of students whose culture differs from the dominant culture

## **This webinar focuses on:**

- ▶ “inner work” – understanding the cultural influences that shape our beliefs, values, and contribute to bias, and provides practical approaches to the
- ▶ “external work” – of supporting and connecting with students from diverse backgrounds.

# What is Culture?

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# Exploring Culture

## What is *culture*?

- Rules that make up a society,
- Shared knowledge and beliefs
- Common practices and habits

Expressions of culture can be visible or invisible (intangible).

- Visible: Art, music, food, and language
- Invisible: Values, beliefs, and attitudes

# Exploring Culture

Culture is the way in which these practices and beliefs are lived out and demonstrated by an individual in his or her own life.

Culture is the intersection of the individual cultural identities coming together in a community, classroom, or other shared space.

## Checking for Understanding

How would you define culture?

# What is Cultural Identity?

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# Exploring Cultural Identity

## ▶ Levels of *culture*?

- Surface – observable, concrete (e.g. food, dress, music, holidays)
- Mid-level – unspoken rules and norms (e.g. personal space, concepts of time, nonverbal communication, nature of friendship)
- Deep – tacit knowledge and unconscious assumptions that govern worldview (e.g. ethics, spirituality, learning, health attitudes, perceived threats)



# Exploring Classroom Identity

## Cultural Identity

- ▶ Student is an English Learner.
- ▶ Student's family are Jehovah's Witnesses.
- ▶ Student is non-verbal or has no mode of communication.
- ▶ Student is in foster care.

## Classroom Culture

- ▶ Student talks with peers in school in both English and their First Language.
- ▶ Student does not participate in holiday or birthday celebrations in class.
- ▶ Student uses an assistive device to talk with classmates and teacher.
- ▶ Student's case worker attends teacher conferences.

# Checking for Understanding

How would you describe your classroom culture?

In what ways is your classroom culturally diverse?



"Don't try to save us. Don't speak for us. Be yourself and be willing to make fun of yourself. Get to know your students as people. And remember to value your students for their strengths; don't define them by their deficits."

Emmett Martin, Lakota Studies teacher,  
Todd County High, Mission, S.D.

# What is cultural competence?

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# Building Cultural Competence

- ▶ **Cultural competence** is having an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families.

It is the ability to understand the within-group differences that make each student unique, while celebrating the between-group variations that make our [world] a tapestry.

(National Education Association)

# Homework: Exploring Culture

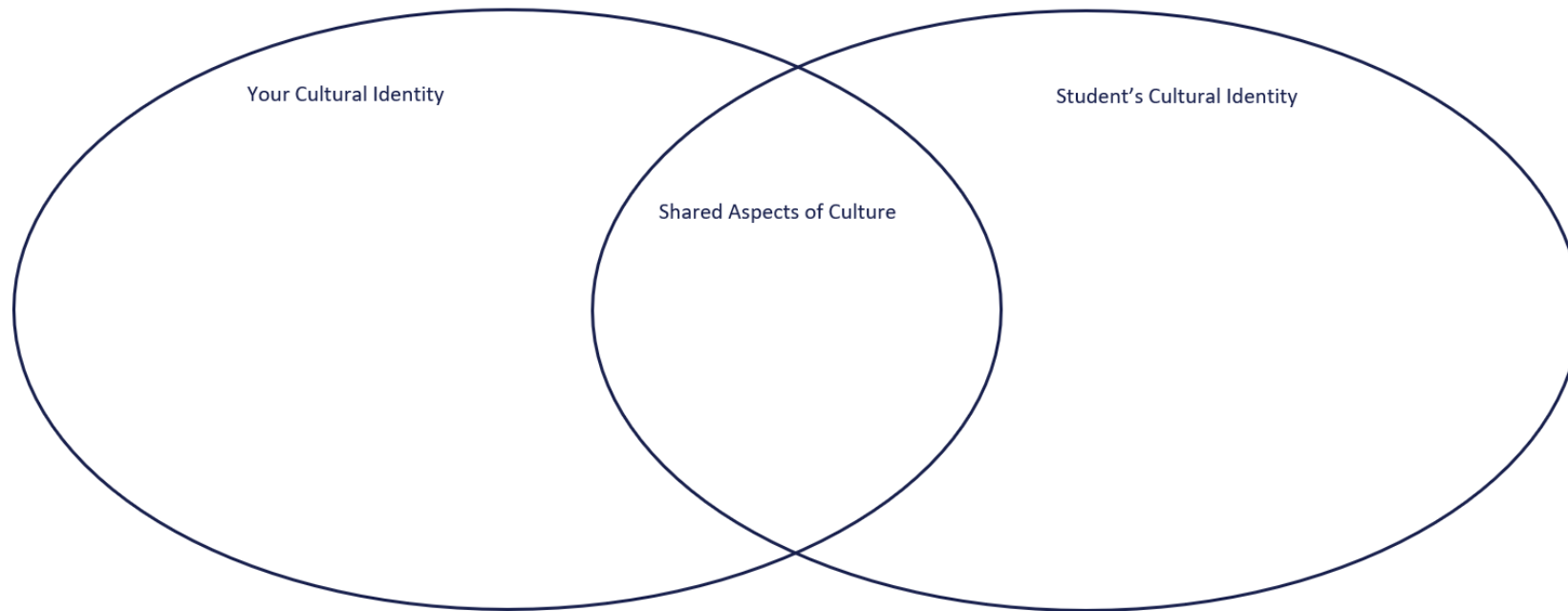
I am a (race/ethnicity) \_\_\_\_\_ who is (gender/gender identity/gender expression or sexual orientation) \_\_\_\_\_ and (age) \_\_\_\_\_ years of age. I was born (national origin) \_\_\_\_\_ and consider myself to be (religion) \_\_\_\_\_. My first language is/I am proficient in (language/communication skills) \_\_\_\_\_. I was raised by (family unit) \_\_\_\_\_. I (have/do not have) \_\_\_\_\_ a disability that presents as (mental/physical ability) \_\_\_\_\_. I attended (education) \_\_\_\_\_ and lived in (hometown) \_\_\_\_\_ for (number of years) \_\_\_\_\_ years. My household income is (socio-economic level) \_\_\_\_\_. I am (hair color) \_\_\_\_\_ with (eye color) \_\_\_\_\_. My favorite tv show growing up was (television show) \_\_\_\_\_.

Cultural Characteristics	Identities I think about most often	Identities I think about least often	My own identities that I would like to learn more about	Identities that have the strongest effect on how I perceive myself	Identities that have the greatest effect on how others perceive me
race/ethnicity					
gender/gender identity/gender expression or sexual orientation					
age					
national origin					

Download a copy of this activity with instructions using this link: [Cultural Identity Exploration Handout](#).



# Homework: Exploring Culture



Download a copy of this activity with instructions using this link:  
[Cultural Identity Exploration Handout](#).

# Section II: Understanding Bias

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# Checking for Understanding

What can I learn from examining implicit biases I might hold?

How might this benefit me in my role as a paraprofessional?

# What is bias?

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# Understanding Bias

What do you need to know about *bias*?

Every person has biases.

Biases can come from:

- Lived personal experiences
- Family traditions and values
- Friends
- Media

Biases can be expressed *implicitly* or *explicitly*.

Biases may cause us to act counter to our beliefs.

# Explicit Bias

Expressed directly

Aware of bias

Operates consciously

**Implicit Bias-** (n.) Refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Rather, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection.

# What is implicit bias?

# Understanding Bias

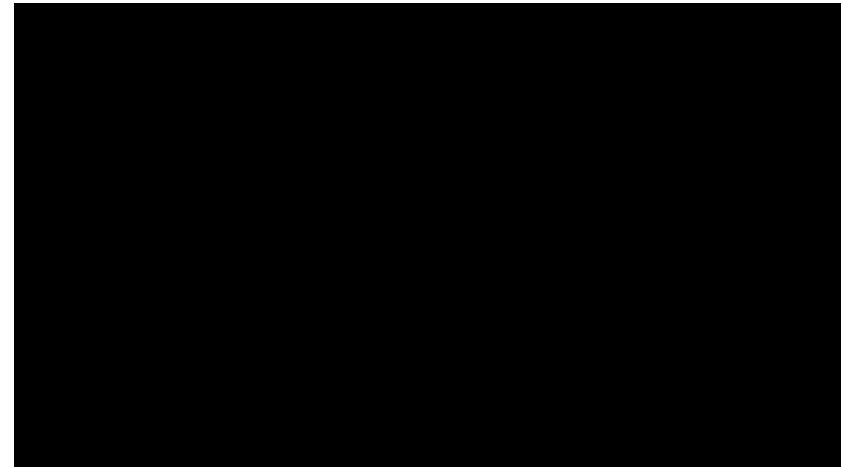
- ▶ **What do you need to know about *bias*?**
  - We cannot eliminate implicit bias.
  - We can change or shift our mindset to learning about other cultures.
  - We can “de-bias” by seeking counter examples and replacing stereotypes.

# Understanding Bias

- Bias is perpetuated by conformity with in-group attitudes and socialization by the culture at large.
- Bias that relates specifically to or influences our attention is called *attentional bias*.
- Because of attentional bias we:
  - Pay attention to some things while ignoring others
  - Give decisions related to prior knowledge or experiences priority over others.

## Understanding Bias

Watch the video [here](#) and follow the announcer's instructions.



Did you get the correct answer?



# Checking for Understanding

How might attention bias cause me to miss significant information about a student(s)?

What students are getting most of my focus for positive attention? Negative attention?

# Understanding Bias

- ▶ How can we avoid making harmful decisions or having negative interactions with students that result from personal bias?
  - ▶ Awareness of personal biases
  - ▶ Striving for greater cultural competence

# Homework: Exploring Bias



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## Gender-Science IAT

*Gender - Science.* This IAT often reveals a relative link between liberal arts and females and between science and males.

## Skin-tone IAT

*Skin-tone ('Light Skin - Dark Skin' IAT).* This IAT requires the ability to recognize light and dark-skinned faces. It often reveals an automatic preference for light-skin relative to dark-skin.

## Arab-Muslim IAT

*Arab-Muslim ('Arab Muslim - Other People' IAT).* This IAT requires the ability to distinguish names that are likely to belong to Arab-Muslims versus people of other nationalities or religions.

## Disability IAT

*Disability ('Disabled - Able' IAT).* This IAT requires the ability to recognize symbols representing abled and disabled individuals.

## Gender-Career IAT

*Gender - Career.* This IAT often reveals a relative link between family and females and between career and males.

## Asian IAT

*Asian American ('Asian - European American' IAT).* This IAT requires the ability to recognize White and Asian-American faces, and images of places that are either American or Foreign in origin.

## Religion IAT

*Religion ('Religions' IAT).* This IAT requires some familiarity with religious terms from various world religions.

## Weight IAT

*Weight ('Fat - Thin' IAT).* This IAT requires the ability to distinguish faces of people who are obese and people who are thin. It often reveals an automatic preference for thin people relative to fat people.

## Presidents IAT

*Presidents ('Presidential Popularity' IAT).* This IAT requires the ability to recognize photos of Donald Trump and one or more previous presidents.

## Race IAT

*Race ('Black - White' IAT).* This IAT requires the ability to distinguish faces of European and African origin. It indicates that most Americans have an automatic preference for white over black.

## Sexuality IAT

*Sexuality ('Gay - Straight' IAT).* This IAT requires the ability to distinguish words and symbols representing gay and straight people. It often reveals an automatic preference for straight relative to



# Exploring Bias

Follow the link to the [Implicit Association Test \(IAT\)](#) and complete these short assessments. When prompted select the following tests:

- ▶ Race
- ▶ Disability

# Understanding Bias

- ▶ Implicit Association Test
- ▶ This test measures strength of associations between pairs of concepts as an indication of implicit (unconscious) bias.
- ▶ The Implicit Association Test is NOT...
  - An indicator of whether you are or are not a racist.
  - A predictor of racist or discriminatory behavior.
  - A measure of whether you are a “good” or “bad” person.

# Session Wrap-up

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# Session Wrap-up

- ▶ Cultural competence helps paraprofessionals and teachers to better provide an environment in which all children can safely learn and grow and to respond to diverse student needs.
- ▶ Knowledge of personal biases helps paraprofessionals avoid acting on biases that may negatively impact some students.
- ▶ Understanding culture and bias requires that we do both the “inner work” – (understanding the cultural influences that shape our beliefs, values, and contribute to bias), and the “external work” (supporting and connecting with students from diverse backgrounds).

# Session Wrap-up

- "Here's Why Having a Brain Means You Have Bias" (Blog: Your Brain at Work - <https://neuroleadership.com/your-brain-at-work/unconscious-bias-in-brain>)
- Implicit Bias Video Series (UCLA Equity, Diversity & Inclusion - <https://equity.ucla.edu/know/implicit-bias/>)
- Video: [Dr. Alfredo Artiles](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQePuaUqtUg) on culture: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQePuaUqtUg>
- Teaching Tolerance <https://www.tolerance.org/>



# Session Wrap-up

- Complete the Webinar Activities form to receive your Professional Growth Points.
- Talk with your supervising teacher about what you've learned.
- Share what you've learned with colleagues.

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[www.projectsuccessindiana.com](http://www.projectsuccessindiana.com)

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THANK  
YOU!