



## Instructor Guide Unit 3: Lesson 4 Implicit Bias

### Objectives:

- The child will be able to define the term implicit bias and describe how stereotypes influence our implicit biases.
- The child will be able to describe how our implicit biases can impact our interactions with others.
- The child will be able to identify strategies that people can use to reduce implicit bias.

**Fundamental Skill(s) or Competencies:** Self-awareness, Social awareness, Appreciating diversity, Empathy development, Responsible decision-making, Critical thinking

**Time Needed:** It is flexible. You can choose to do everything in this guide, or you might select just a few parts to do with the kids each day.

### Materials, depending on which activities you choose:

- 3-4-5 *Key Vocabulary Definitions* sheet – 1 per student (optional)
- 3-4-6 *Association Activity* handout (1 per student)
- 3-4-7 *Info Sheet on Implicit Bias* (optional to send home to parents)
- 3-4-8, 3-4-9, 3-4-10. *Articles 1, 2, and 3* (optional articles to send home for parents on implicit bias)
- 3-4-11 *Assessment for Implicit Bias* handout (1 per student)
- Play-Doh for *Bugs, Reptiles and Rodents* activity
- For visual art activity:
  - Paper, markers, pens, crayons
- A copy of the following picture books to read aloud:
  - [The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family](#) by Ibtihaj Muhammad
  - [When I Was Eight](#) by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton
  - [Something Happened in Our Town](#) by Marianne Celano
- A copy of 3-4-4 *Sharing Circle Script for Implicit Bias*

### Part One: Watch Video on Implicit Bias

Start by watching the ***Implicit Bias Video for Kids***. If kids have trouble focusing, invite them to do 25 jumping jacks or another burst of intense physical activity for one minute before you start the video. After watching the video, you can move into Part Two below.

## Part Two: Discussions on Implicit Bias

**Lesson Essential Questions:** An *explicit* idea is something we deliberately think about, while an *implicit* idea is an unconscious thought or attitude that we may not be aware of. Sometimes, we hold implicit stereotypes about members of other groups or even our own group related to skill, ability, intelligence, level of hostility or violence, and other characteristics, regardless of whether the held ideas are actually true.

*What are the consequences of implicit biases? How can implicit biases create inequality for others? What are the benefits of identifying and even becoming accountable for our own unconscious stereotypes and assumptions?*

### Vocabulary:

**marginalized** (adj.) – relegated or reduced to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group

**stereotype:** An oversimplified and/or unfair belief or idea that groups of people have particular characteristics or that all people in a group are the same.<sup>1</sup> Even when a stereotype about a group is based on a seemingly positive characteristic, it can have a negative impact when people assume that it is true for all members of the group.<sup>2</sup>

**bias:** A preference either for or against an individual or group that interferes with fair judgment.

### Introductory Hook/Question to Engage Students

Before overtly introducing the topic of implicit bias, lead students through the following scenario to help students recognize some of their own implicit thoughts and beliefs.

Scenario: Doctor, nurse, and parents (gender bias; heterosexist bias):

- Tell kids: *A little boy falls off his bicycle and needs emergency surgery on a broken arm. A doctor performs the surgery and a nurse helps take care of the boy when he leaves the operating room. The boy's parents are waiting to see him. Ask kids: How do you picture the doctor and the nurse in your imagination? How do you picture the parents?*
- (The implicit bias is that the doctor is male, the nurse is female, and the parents are a male and a female).

## Discussion of Key Teaching Concepts About Implicit Bias:

**Key Concept One:** An **implicit bias** is an automatic association that your brain makes between two things without you being aware of it. It is also called unconscious bias, because your mind is not consciously choosing these beliefs.

- For example, if you hear me say “peanut butter,” your brain might automatically think the word “jelly.” If you hear the word “thunder,” your brain might automatically associate the word “lightning.”
- Being able to make these quick, automatic associations helps us organize and manage the *billions* of pieces of information our brains need to process in a single day. But sometimes, these automatic associations can be harmful, especially when it comes to how we think about human beings.

**Key Concept Two:** When we sort people into categories -- such as by age, gender, or race -- we form expectations about who they are based on the *category* we put them in rather than the *individual person*.

- This is exactly what happens when you stereotype someone. You immediately assign certain traits to a person based on that person’s membership in a group. Stereotypes can lead you to make the mistake of thinking that *everyone* from that group has those traits.
- For example, you might believe the stereotype that all girls prefer playing with dolls or the stereotype that all boys prefer playing sports. Stereotypes are limiting, and they can even lead to discrimination and bullying. For example, some people make fun of boys who like to play with princesses, because they believe the stereotypes that boys only like sports.

**Key Concept Three:** We all have implicit bias and we all learn stereotypes from the culture surrounding us at home and in our communities.

- We are exposed to stories, books, movies, and the media. We are shaped by our experiences with family, friends, strangers, and our communities. When the culture around us contains negative stereotypes and attitudes about people, we absorb them from a very early age.
- Unfortunately, we can also absorb negative stereotypes about *ourselves*. For example, if you are a girl growing up in a culture that gives you messages about how girls are not as good at math as boys, you might doubt your own math abilities. You hold an implicit bias against yourself.
- Middle-class white cisgender heterosexual culture is presented as a **norm** or a “standard” in the United States in terms of appearance, beauty, language, cultural practices, food, and jobs. People who differ from this culture often experience discrimination due to negative stereotypes and implicit bias against them.

**Key Concept Four:** We tend to prefer people who sound like us, dress like us, have similar hobbies, are from our hometown, etc. We also *tend* to like people who are of the same gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, race or religion as we are.

- In-groups vs. Out-groups: We *generally* tend to hold implicit biases that favor our own “in-group,” (like our own gender, race, age and ethnicity), though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our in-group, especially if the media presents those stereotypes to us.

**Key Concept Five:** The good news is that you **can** reduce your implicit bias towards others!

- You can work to break down implicit bias by forming relationships with people who are different from you. You can read books and watch movies about people who come from different cultures. Getting to know people helps break down stereotypes and reduce implicit bias.
- For example, the white Europeans who colonized America believed that the Native Americans were uncivilized and that their way of life was inferior. But the Europeans who took the time to learn about Native Americans saw how wise Native Americans are. The indigenous people hold centuries of valuable knowledge about the land and the animals and plants that live and grow in North America.
- Even though stereotypes are everywhere in our culture, we do not all act on them. In the end, we have the ability and the responsibility to control our own behavior and treat one another as individuals and with respect.
- If you mistreat someone based on an implicit bias you hold against them, apologize and work to do better going forward.

### **Part Three: Activity Options**

- \*For a one-page brief summary of quick activity options, please see *3-4-3 Quick Guide to Breakout Activity Options for Implicit Bias*.

#### **Activity Option One: Bugs, Reptiles, and Rodents: Implicit Bias activity**

In this game, children will have the chance to share the name of a bug or animal that they have an implicit bias against, and others will help them come up with a few reasons why those creatures are valuable.

- Hand children Play-Doh and a piece of paper and a crayon. Ask each child to either draw or sculpt out of Play-Doh a creature that they dislike or are afraid of. Maybe it’s a spider or a rat or a snake or a bee - anything that they feel is yucky or scary or creepy will do!
- Sit the children in a circle. One at a time, invite each child to hold up their Play-Doh sculpture or drawing. The other kids in the circle have to guess what the creature is. They can ask the creator questions if they need help figuring out what the creature is.
- After the creature has been identified, ask children to share reasons why that creature is valuable or important. Help the child whose turn it is to break down the negative feelings about that creature. Ask the child to name the creature that they made out of Play-Doh or that they drew, and it will become their friend.

### Activity Option Two: Association Exercise.

Provide children a fun chance to see what automatic associations their brains make. You will call out words and the children will write down (or say) the first thing that comes to their mind.

- For example, when you say “peanut butter”, many kids will probably write or say “jelly.” This is a fast-paced game where kids shouldn’t have time to think; they should just write or draw the first word they think about in association.
- If students feel comfortable, invite them to share their responses. For instance, did they write “strong” when “athlete” was read? Did they write “weak” when “crying” was read? Ask them how these links/associations affect our perception of people based on race, gender, age, ability, etc.
- Encourage children to find new associations for each word that challenge their own thoughts. For example, kids might write down “brother” for “nurturing.” They can come up with new associations as a whole group or you can divide children into smaller workgroups.

### Activity Option Three: Hold a full group Sharing Circle to discuss Implicit Bias.

Please use the complete guided script for facilitators labeled *3-4-4 Sharing Circle Script on Implicit Bias*. Allow 20-35 minutes for this activity, depending on how many rounds you complete and how large the circle is.

### Activity Option Four: Reading aloud activity:

We recommend the following books that embody the themes of this lesson plan. After reading each book aloud, ask the children how it relates to the idea of growing up with implicit bias. Children may draw pictures of the story as they listen.

- [The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family by Ibtihaj Muhammad](#)
- [When I Was Eight by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton](#)
- [Something Happened in Our Town by Marianne Celano](#)

**Activity Option Five: Physical activities:** The children will challenge their natural associations through fun physical games.

1. **Unusual animal movements:** You will call out the names of animals, and in response, the children will shout out a word that describes how that animal moves. Then, invite the children to move across the room using a *different* method of movement than that animal uses. For example, if you say “frog”, they might yell “hop” and then they might slide across the floor like a snake or sprint like a cheetah. Animal ideas: snake, elephant, spider, fish, kangaroo, bunny, gorilla, horse.
2. **Unexpected traits version of “duck, duck, goose”:** Have the children form a circle. Whoever is “it” needs to touch each child on the head and say the name of an animal. But when they are ready to choose someone to chase after them, they have to pick a word that describes a trait that is different from the animal they chose. For example, “bunny, bunny, **prickly**” “shark, shark, **snuggly**” or “snail, snail, **speedy**.”

**Activity Option Six: Drama/Theater activity:** The children will create skits about this week's theme, which is *Implicit Bias*. Below are prompts.

- You and your friends are on a voyage to outer space, and you land on Mars. You've been taught that all Martians are dangerous and aggressive, and you are afraid to leave your spaceship. The Martians that surround your spaceship seem friendly. How do you get to know them and learn about their culture?
- A new friend has invited you to a family dinner at their apartment. Their family has emigrated from another country, and their grandmother is cooking a meal with traditional foods from their culture. Their family plans to play their favorite music and teach you about their customs. Make a skit about the evening!

**Activity Option Seven: Visual Art activity:** Children will make drawings that help break down stereotypes. They can use markers, crayons, paints, or colored pencils.

- **Portraits that combat stereotypes:** Each child will draw a portrait that represents a contrast to stereotypes. For example, a child might draw someone in a wheelchair who is wearing a superhero cape and has saved everyone in the town from a beast. A child might draw a father playing with dolls with his son. A child might draw a Black woman as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States or a picture of a family that has two dads.
- **Share stories about the portraits:** Invite children to share their pictures with the group and describe how their portraits help break down stereotypes. Time permitting, children can make multiple drawings to show people in a variety of roles. Children might get new ideas from each other's drawings.

### **Articles on implicit bias for parents and staff members**

- 3-4-8 Article #1: *Girls as young as 6 believe men are smarter than women, study shows*
- 3-4-9 Article #2: *Researchers: Teachers begin favoring boys in math as early as kindergarten*
- 3-4-10 Article #3: *Do teachers treat children differently based on their color? Study says yes*

## Part Four: Assessment

If you want to do a formal assessment at the end, hand out one printed copy to each child of *3-4-11 Assessment: Implicit Bias*. Read aloud the instructions on the top of the page and ask the children to do the written exercise. For primary students, you can talk through this assessment as a discussion or have them do it as a drawing.

Answer key to assessment is below with the correct answers in bold.

### 1. Implicit Biases:

- a) Have no impact in the “real-world”
- b) Are shortcuts or associations our brains create to fill in gaps about our social environment**
- c) Are ideas and beliefs that we hold that we are aware of and agree with

### 2. Implicit biases

- a) Are learned**
- b) Can be interrupted or stopped if we make an effort**
- c) Are always permanent and fixed

### 3. Name one strategy people can use to try to overcome their implicit biases.

#### **Possible answers include:**

- 1) Become aware of our implicit biases and choose to break them down.
- 2) Read books and consume media about people from other cultures.
- 3) Seek diverse role models and examples of people who contradict (or don’t fit) the bias or stereotype.
- 4) Spend significant time hanging out across racial lines or with people whose backgrounds are different from our own.

## **Additional Activities:**

Alternate Associations Exercise: Display images of superheroes when they’re not in their superhero persona—such as their cape, cowl or armor—to show our assumptions based on class, race, physical size, ability, age, etc. For example, Peter Parker (Spider-Man) and Cindy Moon (Silk) from the film *Spider-Man: Homecoming*; Jessica Jones and Luke Cage from the television series *The Defenders*; Okoye from the film *Black Panther*; Jay Garrick, the original Flash, or Charles Xavier from X-Men; the character Oracle from *DC Comics*; or Faith from the comic book *Faith* by DC Comics are some examples of dynamic superhero characters who break away from the ideals of the middle-class, heteronormative, white mainstream, able-bodied culture.

## **Supplemental/ Extended Readings for Parents and Staff**

PBS Newshour, July 11, 2017, adapted by Newsela staff

*How unintentional but insidious bias can be the most harmful*

<https://newsela.com/read/sel-unintentional-harmful-bias/id/32527/>

S. Mullainathan, Jan. 3, 2015, The New York Times, *Racial Bias, Even When We Have Good Intentions*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/upshot/the-measuring-sticks-of-racial-bias-.html?action=click&module=RelatedCoverage&pgtype=Article&region=Footer>

### **Resources:**

*Getting Called Out: How to Apologize by Chescaleigh*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8xJXKYL8pU>

Project Implicit

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/faqs.html>

*Understanding Implicit Bias: What Educators Should Know*

<https://www.aft.org/ae/winter2015-2016/staats>

### **Common Core Standards:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on ... topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2

Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate ... each source.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

### **Notes:**

a. From Teaching Tolerance, <https://www.tolerance.org/>

b. Anti-Defamation League, <https://www.adl.org/>