MULTI-LEVEL INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS DISPROPORTIONALITY

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Workshop for NeMTSS Virtual Summit

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- At the conclusion of this workshop, participants will be able to
  - Describe a multidimensional view of bias and conceptual model of disproportionality
  - Identify strategies to address implicit bias at both individual and systems levels
  - Describe school-wide interventions to address disproportionality in school discipline

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FOR DISCUSSION…

What is the most significant equity issue in your school/LEA?

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MISEDUCATION: IS THERE RACIAL INEQUALITY IN YOUR SCHOOL?

- https://projects.propublica.org/miseducation/

- Data from the US Department of Education
  - Civil Rights Data Collection
  - Common Core of Dara
  - Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates
- Indicators
  - Opportunity
  - Discipline
 - Segregation Index
  - Achievement Gap

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Nonwhite Students	33%
Students Who Get Free/Reduced Price Lunch	44%
High School Graduation Rate	89%
Opportunity *(White students are this likely to be in an AP class compared with Black students)*	1.5
Discipline *(Black students are this number of times likely to be suspended compared with White students)*	5.3

NEBRASKA DATA

Retrieved from ProPublica database

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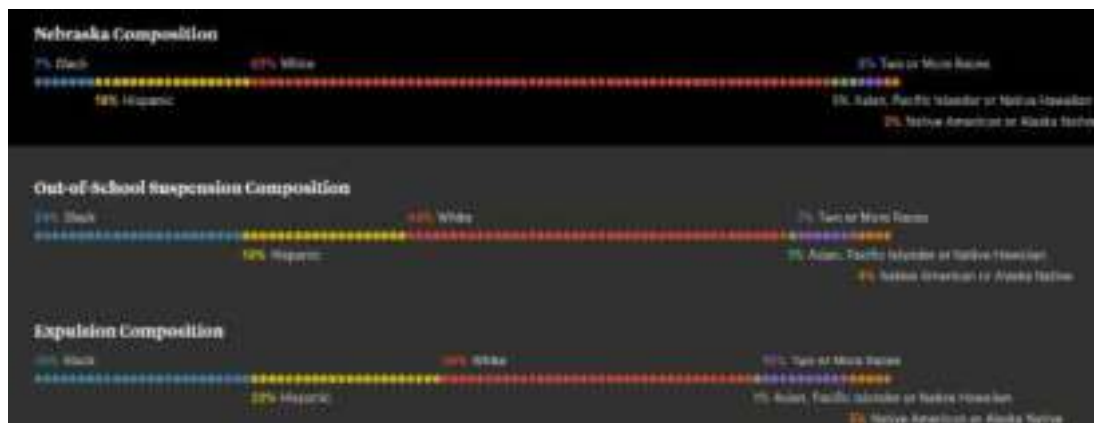
NEBRASKA DATA

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8/12/2020

	Omaha Public Schools	Lincoln Public Schools
Nonwhite Students	71%	33%
Students Who Get Free/Reduced Price Lunch	74%	83%
High School Graduation Rate	79%	42%
Opportunity *(White students are this likely to be in an AP class compared with Black students)*	2.9x	2.2x
Discipline *(Black students are this number of times likely to be suspended compared with White students)*	3.2x	3.6x
Segregation Index *(Segregation between Black and White students)*	Medium	Medium
Achievement Gap *(Black students are this many grades behind White students academically)*	2.7	2.3

NEBRASKA DATA

Retrieved from ProPublica Database

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EXPLICIT BIAS VS. IMPLICIT BIAS

Explicit Bias

Implicit Bias

Discriminatory Behavior

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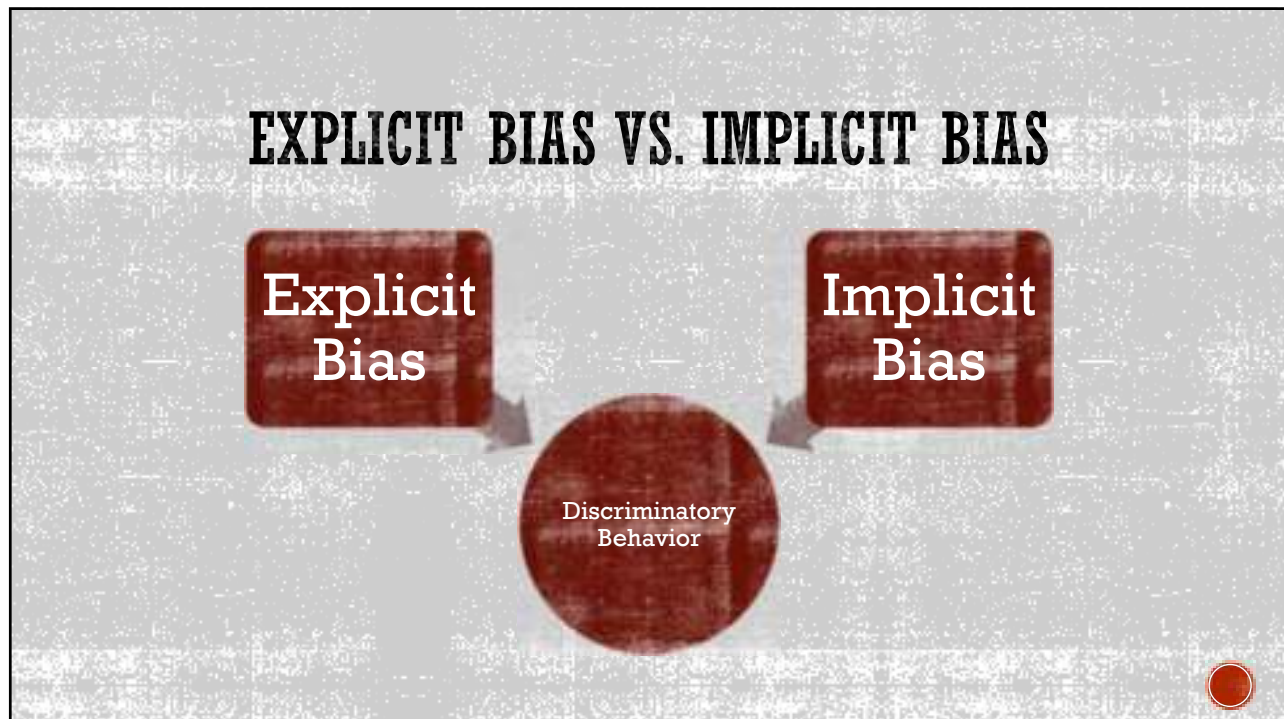
IMPLICIT BIAS AND DISCIPLINARY DECISIONS

- Frequency of discipline referrals
  - Racial/ethnic minoritized students more likely to be disciplined for subjective behavior infractions (e.g., disruptive behavior, disrespect, defiance)
- Appraisals of student behavior
  - Facial expressions of Black individuals more likely to be interpreted as angry
  - Black boys perceived as more hostile
- Severity of discipline
  - Compared to White students, Black students more likely to be labeled troublemakers
    - Predicts harsher discipline after second infraction, more days of detention, and increased likelihood of future suspension
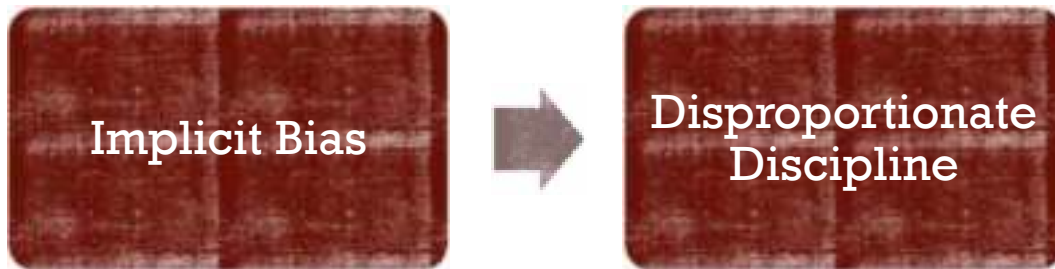
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CONDITIONS THAT ENCOURAGE BIASED RESPONDING

- Time constraints
- Ambiguity
- Cognitive overload/ "busyness"
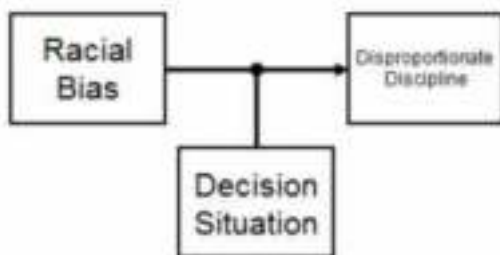- Lack of attention to the task

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UNIDIMENSIONAL VIEW OF BIAS
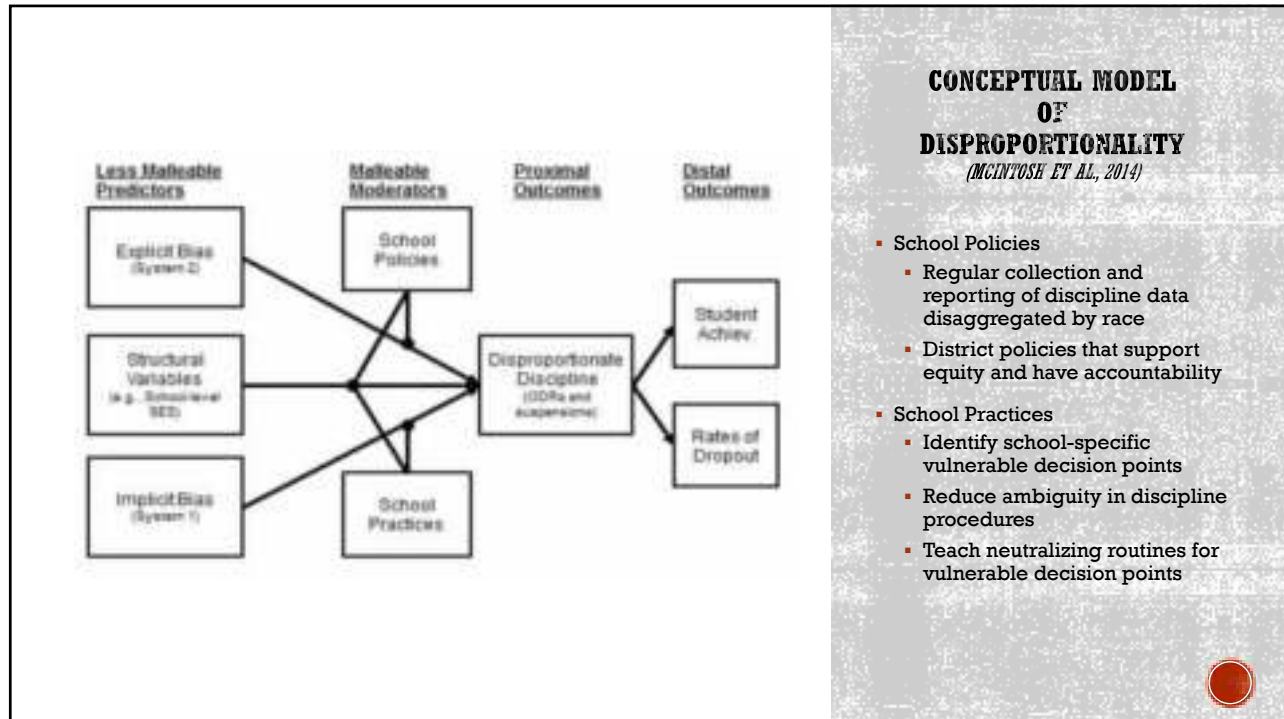
Implicit Bias ➡ Disproportionate Discipline
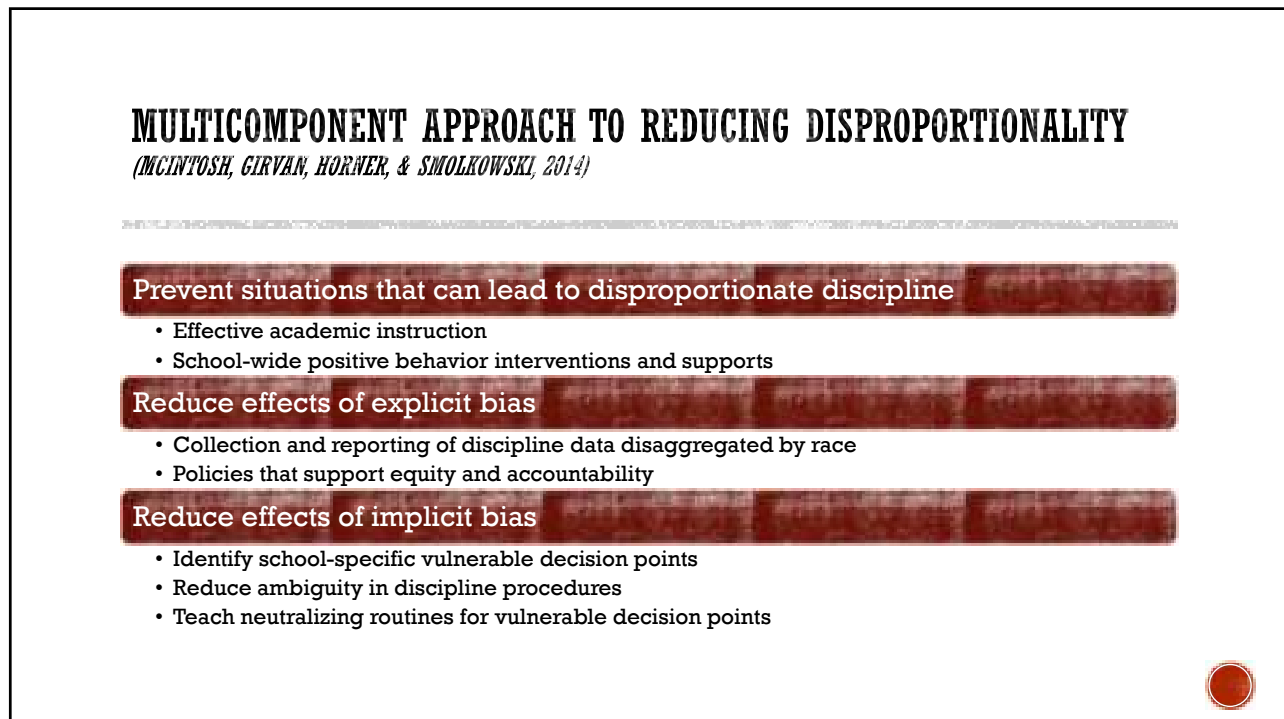
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MULTIDIMENSIONAL VIEW OF BIAS

- Vulnerable Decision Points
  - Subjective behavior
  - Vague discipline system
  - Classrooms
  - Hunger
  - Fatigue
  - Lack of familiarity with student

Racial Bias → Disproportionate Discipline

Decision Situation

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Slide 13

CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF DISPROPORTIONALITY
(MCINTOSH ET AL., 2014)

- School Policies
  - Regular collection and reporting of discipline data disaggregated by race
  - District policies that support equity and have accountability
- School Practices
  - Identify school-specific vulnerable decision points
  - Reduce ambiguity in discipline procedures
  - Teach neutralizing routines for vulnerable decision points

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Slide 14

MULTICOMPONENT APPROACH TO REDUCING DISPROPORTIONALITY
(MCINTOSH, GIRVAN, HORNER, & SMOLKOWSKI, 2014)

Prevent situations that can lead to disproportionate discipline
- Effective academic instruction
- School-wide positive behavior interventions and supports

Reduce effects of explicit bias
- Collection and reporting of discipline data disaggregated by race
- Policies that support equity and accountability

Reduce effects of implicit bias
- Identify school-specific vulnerable decision points
- Reduce ambiguity in discipline procedures
- Teach neutralizing routines for vulnerable decision points

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PREVENTING SITUATIONS THAT CAN LEAD TO DISPROPORTIONATE DISCIPLINE

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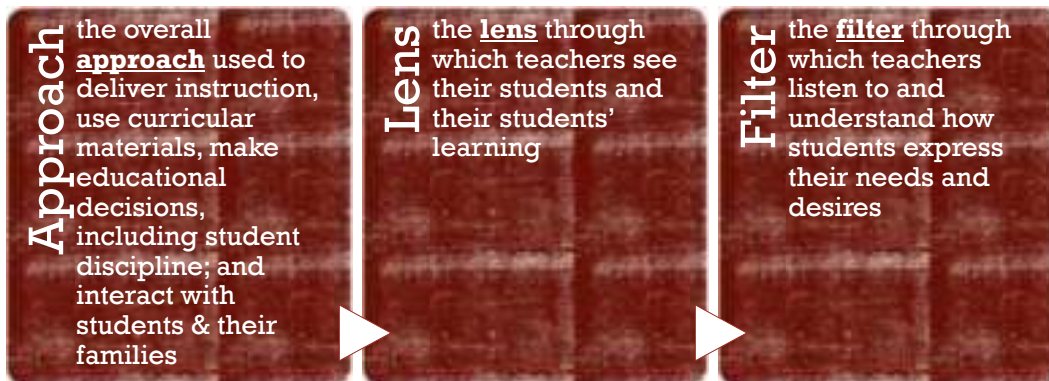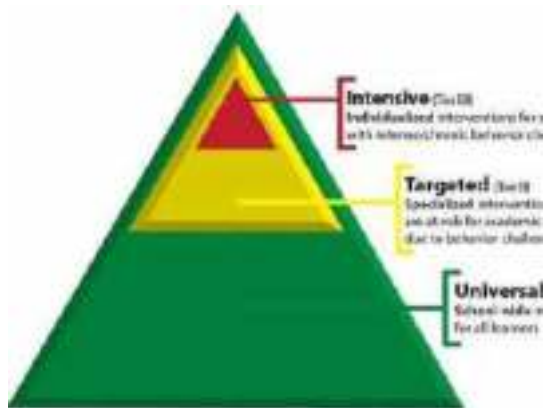| Instructional Strategy	Guiding Questions
Use Explicit Instruction	• Did I model for the students how to use each step of the task with a practical example? • Did I lead students through doing it on their own?
Build and Prime Background Knowledge	• Do I have a basic understanding of my students' cultures and how that might affect their background knowledge, participation, or understanding of new knowledge? • How can I make these concepts more relevant for students?
Increase Opportunities to Respond	• Did I teach the expected correct responses to the educational materials before asking my students to respond independently? • Did I provide an equitable number of opportunities to respond for all student groups (e.g., students of color, students with disabilities, ELL students)?
Provide Performance Feedback	• Am I providing performance feedback to students in multiple ways appropriate to their needs? • Did I provide specific and contingent praise for academic and social behaviors during instructional time?

ENGAGING INSTRUCTION TO INCREASE EQUITY

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CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND SUSTAINING TEACHING *(SKELTON, 2012)*

Approach
the overall **approach** used to deliver instruction, use curricular materials, make educational decisions, including student discipline; and interact with students & their families

▶

Lens
the **lens** through which teachers see their students and their students' learning

▶

Filter
the **filter** through which teachers listen to and understand how students express their needs and desires

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SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS (SWPBIS)

Intensive (Tier III)
Individualized interventions for [...]
with intense/chronic behavior ch[...]

Targeted (Tier II)
Specialized intervention[...]
[...] at risk for academic [...]
due to behavior challen[...]

Universal
School-wide [...]
for all learners

- Define and teach positive school-wide behavior expectations to all students
- Adults acknowledge and reward appropriate student behavior
  - Reduces likelihood inappropriate behaviors will inadvertently be rewarded
- Collection and use of discipline and implementation data to guide efforts

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WHY SWPBIS FOR SCHOOL DISCIPLINE
(GREFLUND ET AL., 2014)

- Proactive, instructional approach may prevent unwanted behavior and exposure to biased responses to unwanted behavior
- Increasing positive student-teacher interactions may enhance relationships to prevent challenges
- More objective referral and discipline procedures may reduce subjectivity and influence of cultural bias
- Professional development may provide teachers with more instructional responses

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	At SCHOOL it looks like	At HOME it looks like	In my NEIGHBORHOOD it looks like
Be Safe			
Be Respectful			
Be Responsible			

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PBIS

- Develop and revise school-wide systems with active involvement of families, students, and the community
- Use regular student and family surveys to assess acceptability and fit

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REDUCING THE EFFECTS OF EXPLICIT BIAS

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SCHOOL POLICIES VULNERABLE TO BIAS

Discipline Referrals

Dress Codes

Special Education Referrals

Access to Honors/AP Classes
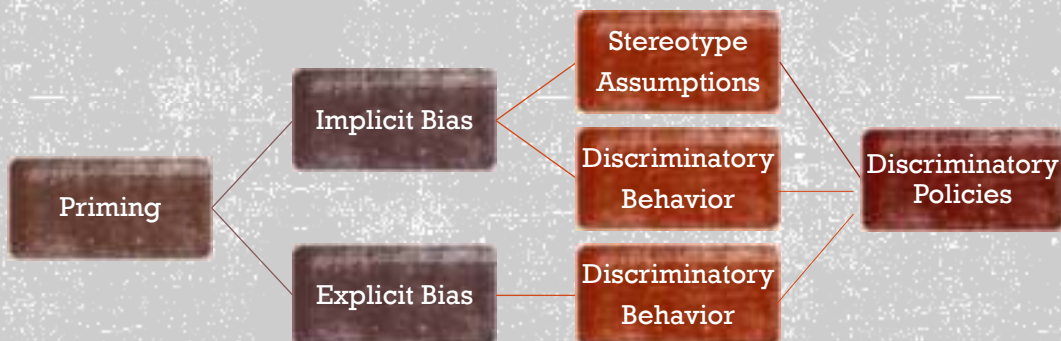
Suspension / Expulsion Decisions

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CONDITIONS THAT ENCOURAGE BIAS IN POLICIES

- Systemic Pressure
- Lack of Data
- Heavy Priming
- Institutionalized Racism

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IMPLICIT BIAS IN POLICIES

Priming → Implicit Bias → Stereotype Assumptions / Discriminatory Behavior → Discriminatory Policies

Priming → Explicit Bias → Discriminatory Behavior

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ASSESSING DISPARATE IMPACT

- Does the school district have a facially neutral policy or practice that produces an adverse impact on students of a particular race, color, or national origin when compared to other students?

- Can the school district demonstrate that the policy or practice is necessary to meet an important educational goal?

- Are there comparably effective alternative policies or practices that would meet the school district's stated educational goal with less of a discriminatory effect on the disproportionately affected racial group; OR is the identified justification a pretext for discrimination?

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXAMINING SCHOOL POLICIES

- Examine the application of discipline policies related to students.
- Examine the implementation of student code of conduct and students/parent interpretation.
- Be aware of intentionality and disparate impact
- Identify strategies to effectively engage parents, families, and the community to form partnerships for student achievement, positive outcomes, and a nurturing school climate.

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REDUCING THE EFFECTS OF IMPLICIT BIAS

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OVERRIDING IMPLICIT BIAS

- Be **motivated** to control bias
  - Awareness of own biases
  - Concern about the consequences of their bias

- Be **aware** of the potential for bias

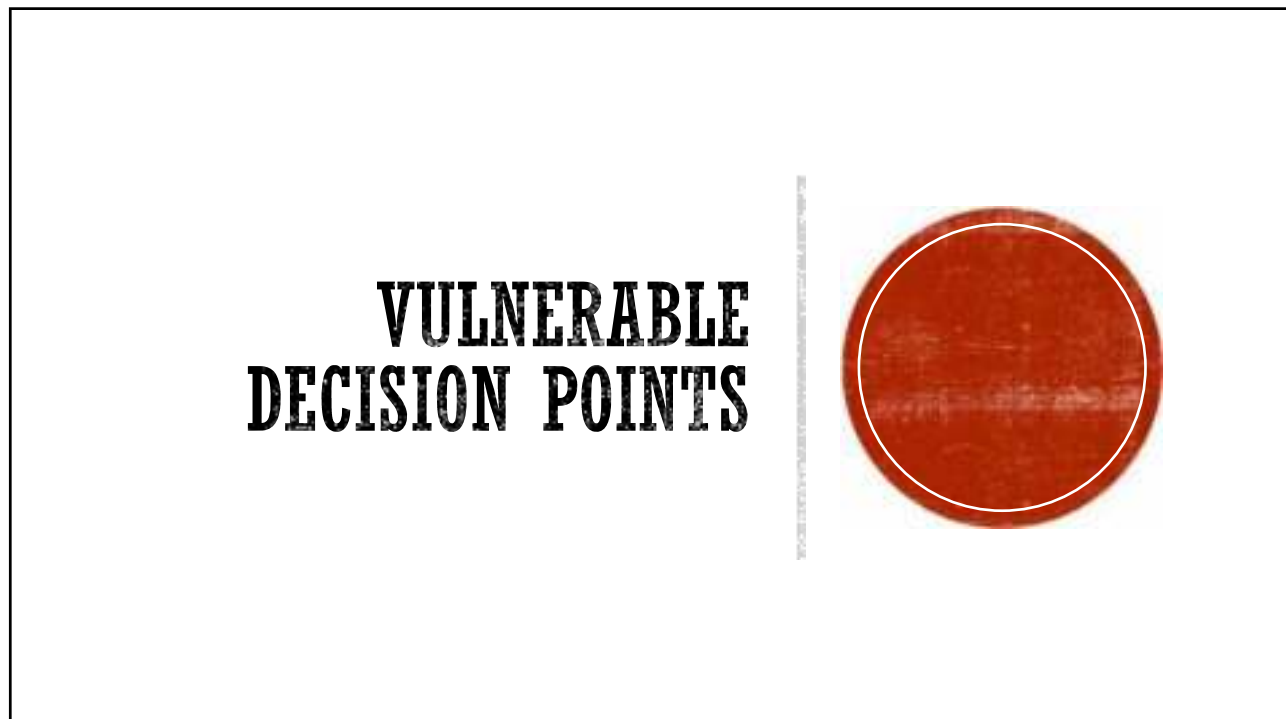- Take the **time** to consider individual characteristics and avoid stereotyped evaluations

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Strategy	Description
Stereotype Replacement	Recognizing when one is responding to a situation or person in a stereotypical fashion, and actively substituting the biased response with an unbiased one
Counter-Stereotypic Reasoning	Detecting one's stereotypical responses and visualizing examples of people who are famous or known personally who prove the stereotype to be inaccurate
Individuation	Gathering specific information about a person, so that the particulars of that person replace generic notions based on group membership
Perspective Taking	Adopting the perspective of a member of a stigmatized group. This strategy can be useful in assessing the emotional impact on individuals who are often being stereotyped in negative ways.
Increased Opportunities for Contact	Actively seeking out situations that expose us to positive examples of stereotyped groups

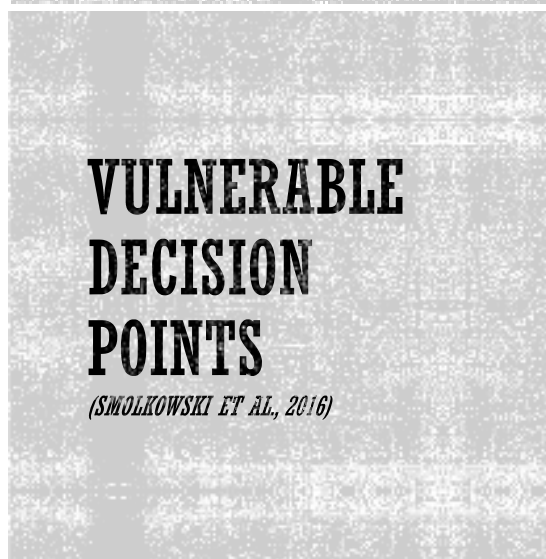# MULTI-COMPONENT IMPLICIT BIAS REDUCING INTERVENTION
(DEVINE, ET AL. 2012; GREENWALD, MCGHEE, & SCHWARTZ, 1998)

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VULNERABLE DECISION POINTS

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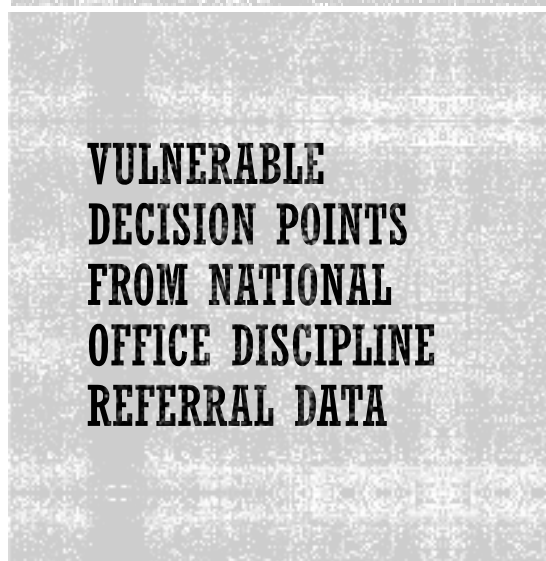## VULNERABLE DECISION POINTS

(SMOLKOWSKI ET AL., 2016)

- Contextual events or elements that increase the likelihood of implicit bias affecting discipline decision making

- Two parts
  - Elements of the situation
 - The person's decision state (i.e., internal state)

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VULNERABLE DECISION POINTS FROM NATIONAL OFFICE DISCIPLINE REFERRAL DATA

- Subjective problem behavior – AMBIGUITY?
  - Defiance, disrespect, or disruption
  - Major vs. minor

- Non-classroom areas – LACK OF CONTACT?
  - Hallways

- Classrooms – DEMANDS? RELEVANCE?

- Afternoons – FATIGUE?

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NEUTRALIZING ROUTINES FOR REDUCING EFFECTS OF IMPLICIT BIAS
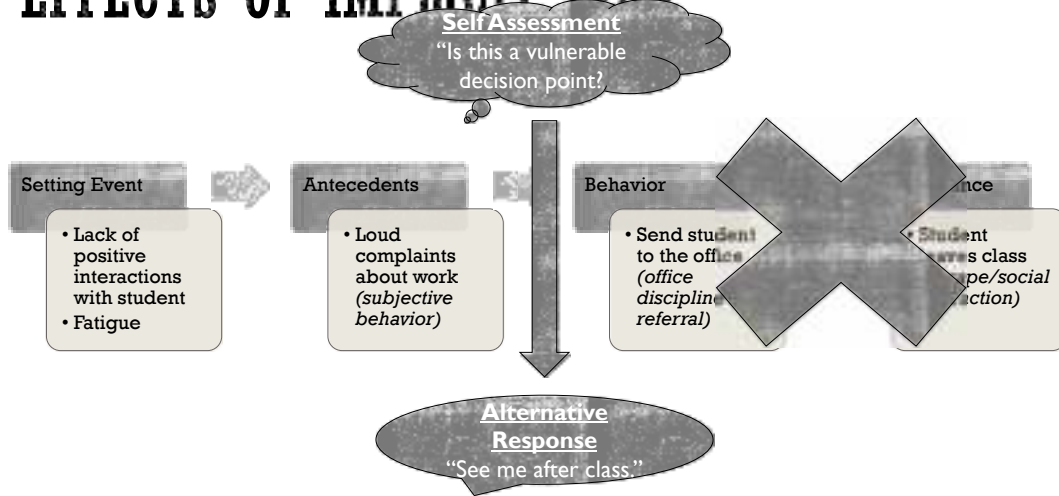
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REDUCING THE EFFECTS OF IMPLICIT BIAS

- **Reduce ambiguity** in office discipline referral (ODR) definitions and behavior referral process
  - Clear definitions of problem behavior
  - Clear guidelines for staff vs. teacher managed behaviors
- Identify specific **vulnerable decision points (VDPs)**
  - National Data
  - Local (district or school)
- Teach a **neutralizing routine**
  - Self-assess presence of VDP
  - Use alternative response

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TWO-STEP NEUTRALIZING ROUTINE

When you see a problem behavior, stop and ask yourself…

1. Is this a vulnerable decision point?
   - Situation
   - Decision-state
2. If it is a vulnerable decision point, use an agreed upon alternative

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WHAT MAKES FOR A GOOD NEUTRALIZING ROUTINE?

- If-then statements (now-that)
- Brief
- Clear Steps
- Doable
- Interrupts the chain of events

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WHAT MAKES FOR A GOOD ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE?

- Delay
  - "See me after class."
- Pause
  - Think it through before sending to the office
- Use least exclusionary choice
- Speak with student
  - State your confidence in them
  - Ask about their needs privately

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IF THIS IS A VULNERABLE DECISION POINT...

- Delay responses to student behavior
- Speak privately to the student
- Take a few deep breaths
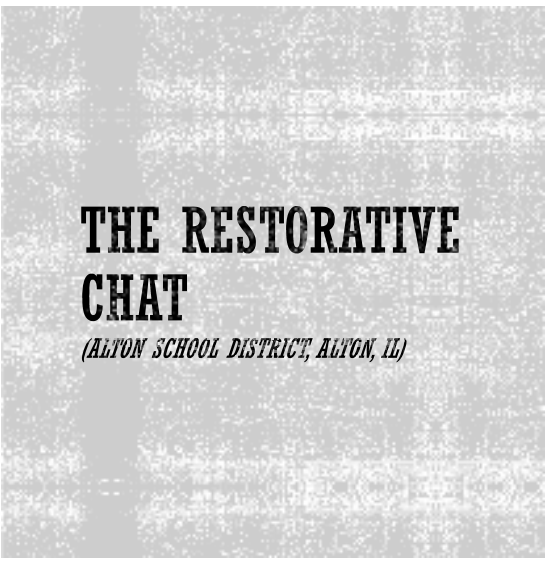- Reframe the situation

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SAMPLE NEUTRALIZING ROUTINE

- **TRY**
  - **T**ake a deep breath
  - **R**eflect on your emotions
  - **Y**outh's best interest
    - "Let's TRY that again."
    - "Let's TRY it a different way."
    - "Let's TRY how we do it at school."

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THE RESTORATIVE CHAT

(ALTON SCHOOL DISTRICT, ALTON, IL)

- Tell me what happened.
- What you were thinking at the time?
- What do you think about it now?
- Who did this affect?
- What do you need to do about it?
- How can we make sure this doesn't happen again?
- What I can do to help you?

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FIVE-POINT INTERVENTION APPROACH TO ENHANCE EQUITY IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

- Use engaging **academic instruction** to reduce the support gap (achievement gap)
- Implement a **behavior framework** that is preventive, multi-tiered, and culturally responsive
- Collect, use, and report **disaggregated** discipline data
- Develop **policies** with accountability for disciplinary equity
- Teach **neutralizing routines** for vulnerable decision points

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RESOURCES

- Teaching Tolerance
- Center for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
  - PBIS Cultural Responsiveness Field Guide: Resources for Trainers and Coaches
  - Pyramid Equity Project: Defining Disproportionate Discipline—Understanding Common Measures
  - Restorative Questions

- Breaking the Prejudice Habit
- National Association of School Psychologists
  - Implicit Bias: A Foundation for School Psychologists
  - Understanding Race and Privilege
  - Social Justice Lesson Plans
  - Intersectionality and School Psychology: Implications for Practice

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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