What is Anti-Bias Education?

Anti-bias education is an approach to teaching and learning designed to increase understanding of differences and their value to a respectful and civil society and to actively challenge bias, stereotyping and all forms of discrimination in schools and communities. It incorporates inclusive curriculum that reflects diverse experiences and perspectives, instructional methods that advance all students’ learning, and strategies to create and sustain safe, inclusive and respectful learning communities.

A basic tenet of anti-bias education states that bias is learned. From their earliest days of life, children receive messages about their own identity and the identities of others. These messages are often subtle and learned unconsciously—from family, friends, school and the media—but they can have a lasting impact on people’s self-image and worldview. When diversity (differences based on race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, culture, learning style, socioeconomic class, body type and ability) is not valued or respected, harmful behaviors like name-calling, bullying and social exclusion can emerge.

Anti-Bias Mastery Skills

Anti-bias education develops students’ knowledge, critical thinking and skills in the following areas: the various dimensions of personal and cultural identity;
basic terms relating to bias and discrimination; the impact of culture and
differences on communication; and recognizing, acknowledging and addressing
bias and discrimination in oneself, others and within institutions.

Anti-Bias Education is for All Students
Anti-bias education provides opportunities for students, educators and families to
learn from and about one another and explore ways to address bias and prejudice
through awareness, intervention and personal action. An anti-bias approach
fosters positive relationships and an inclusive, welcoming environment for all
members of the community.

The benefits of creating a positive school environment extend beyond social
connection. A 2016 study published in the Review of Educational
Research analyzed over 15 years of research findings that indicated that positive
school climate can have a direct impact on students’ academic performance.
Recognizing that students who feel part of a positive school community tend to do
deeper academically, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to
consider non-academic factors—like school climate—in measuring success.

Anti-bias education supports schools in their vital role of upholding the nation’s
democratic ideals and in preparing young people with the skills and knowledge to
be successful in today’s pluralistic society. Providing all students with a quality
education—one in which academic and social-emotional development are
inseparable goals—is essential to attaining equity and fostering responsible,
engaged citizenship.

Anti-Bias Education is a School-Wide Commitment
Anti-bias education is most effective when schools take a systemic, proactive
approach that integrates anti-bias principles into all aspects of their culture,
policies and pedagogy. A comprehensive anti-bias plan includes:

- Anti-bias curriculum and resources for educators
- Staff professional development in areas of anti-bias education, social-emotional learning and bullying prevention
- Student leadership training and opportunities to develop ally behaviors
- Educational forums and community events for families
- Ongoing, school-wide commitment to promoting a culture of respect and inclusion