Core Function → School Culture and Climate

Effective Practice → All school personnel who come into contact with English Learners (ELs) have developed the understanding and skills needed to create a safe and welcoming school environment

Success Indicator CC06: Designated school personnel are knowledgeable about and follow procedures to report/respond to allegations of inequity, mistreatment, and/or bias in a sensitive and timely manner. (5865)

Overview: Despite the best efforts of school leaders and faculty to create safe and welcoming school environments, children of color and those of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds often encounter structural and institutional inequities in American schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Kutoba & Lin, 2006). Although the responsibility to provide a safe and welcoming environment falls on all school personnel, designating certain staff members to monitor the school environment for the equal treatment of all students is critical to ensuring fair and equal treatment. For many in the school and surrounding community, the swiftness and level of action taken in response to allegations of mistreatment is as important as the policies created to prevent them. Consequently, schools that serve ELs must not only take all the necessary precautions to provide ELs with the protection afforded to them by civil rights laws, but be prepared to respond appropriately when those rights have been infringed upon.

Questions: When and how might ELs encounter bias, mistreatment and/or inequality in school settings? How might school avoid and/or pro-actively address inequity, mistreatment, and/or bias? What factors should be included in an anti-bias procedures or response policy?

When and how might ELs encounter bias, mistreatment, and/or inequality in school settings?

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) speak of the danger of the covert discrimination that occurs in our systems and structures; it is often ignored or, worse, victims are told that it is nonexistent. Although it is difficult to detect, covert bias persists in U.S. schools and is very harmful. For example, ELs routinely encounter discrimination based on language proficiency and accent. Liggett (2014) calls this form of discrimination linguicism, which has been found to be a permanent fixture in many ELs' lives in U.S. schools. In fact, research shows that ELs are often inaccurately and unnecessarily placed into remedial programs due to the widespread assumption that their accent and language proficiency renders them unable to perform at high academic levels (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). Extensive remedial education not only delays their progress at school but also dissuades them to continue in their education (Yosso, 2002).

The curriculum is also an area where bias towards ELs has been observed. Instructional materials and curricula that do not incorporate students' diverse backgrounds fail to empower ELs and negatively influence the views they have about their home cultures and languages. Conversely, the appreciation of ELs' experiences as an important building block of their identity development cultivates a better understanding of the situated and complex characteristics of their identity factors; therefore, integrating ELs' experiences in the curriculum allows them to voice their perspective and convey alternative understandings of their learning (Tiggett, 2014). Liggett (2014) recounts Delgado's assertion that curriculum passes on myths, presuppositions, and received wisdom presented and accepted as common culture, which render minorities one-down. This viewpoint substantiates what is found in the literature: biased content contributes to the misrepresentation and marginalization of cultural minorities. In fact, according to Ndura (2004), biased curriculum presents issues of stereotyping, omission of ELs' identity characteristics and the role they play in

everyday life, and the avoidance of controversial topics such as discrimination and prejudice, in favor of more idealistic and traditional view of national history or current issues (pp.147–148).

EL students may also experience more overt discrimination, racism, and bullying from teachers and students. Pearson and Navarro's (2012) survey of TESOL professionals revealed a genuine concern for 'teachers who roll their eyes at students, who refer to ELLs as 'those kids,' and who exhibit an us vs. them mentality' (p. 8), which implicitly supports a classroom culture of disrespect and lack of acceptance of ELs. Some teachers have revealed negative attitudes toward ELs because they are frustrated with ELs' low English proficiency and academic achievement in mainstream classrooms. Their annoyance is indicative of the ways in which they are apt to marginalize ELs during daily classroom interactions. Research suggests that some teachers feel burdened by ELs, convey pessimism about their abilities to learn, and fail to engage them (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Prejudiced teachers may discipline ELs harshly or disproportionally higher than other students.

ELs have also reported mistreatment from peers. Research shows that ELs are easily targeted because of perceived differences (Pearson & Navarro, 2012). These differences are likely to include speech (e.g., rhythm, stress, tempo, interval of silence); directness vs. indirectness; formality vs. informality; facial expressions, including eye contact or lack thereof; body language and gestures; spatial orientation (as an indicator of dominance, extroversion, and such); movement; clothing; courtesy cues (e.g., politeness rituals); and cultural norms and cultural expectations (p. 3.).

Other factors increase the risk of ELs to be victims of bullying. For example, the more unfamiliar ELs' culture and language are to the school community, the more they are at risk. Disability also increases the risk of being bullied, so it is recommended that school personnel pay special attention to ELs with disabilities. ELs with disabilities are twice as likely as general education ELs to be bullied (Mah, 2009; Rose, 2011). Bullying's severity increases when the presence of adults is not felt, and it must be solved by school personnel through a culture of respect and tolerance of all cultures and languages (Espelage & Swearer, 2004).

For all these reasons, school code should put in place procedures to ensure that ELs are aware of their civil rights and understand the process to follow when they are subject to unfair disciplinary actions. Additionally, faculty and staff need to be aware of how to prevent issues of discrimination and be prepared to swiftly address occasions when reports are made.

How might school avoid and/or pro-actively address inequity, mistreatment, and/or bias?

School leaders, including principals, are in a position to directly influence the extent to which schools and school staff create inclusive and welcoming environments for ELs (Ross & Berger, 2009). Principals and other school administrative leaders impact school cultural attitudes toward equity, diversity, and inclusivity, and research has shown that the beliefs and attitudes held by principals about equity within educational contexts are often mirrored in the climate of the school (Salisbury, 2006). Extant literature delineates specific strategies principals and other school leaders can implement to ensure that school personnel are trained and the necessary procedures are followed to create an inclusive and unbiased school climate (Ross & Berger, 2009, pp. 1–7):

1. School leaders should support staff in efforts to discuss pertinent issues pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusivity within the context of their specific educational institution.
2. Principals and other school leaders should model positive and welcoming behaviors, including the provision of scaffolding and supports for both students and teachers.
3. School leaders should provide ample training opportunities that include an open description and discussion of important concepts, such as curriculum bias and faulty generalizations, to provide teachers and staff with cognitive and intellectual support.
4. School leaders should work to maintain a safe and inclusive school environment by creating supportive networks for students and staff to share feelings and experiences, with the ultimate goal of encouraging full participation and fostering a sense of belonging,

Preventing Bullying
TESOL professionals shared the following recommendations to stop the victimization of ELs (Pearson & Navarro, 2012). First, schools should implement training sessions aimed at teaching school personnel, students, and parents the true meaning of bullying, its causes, and the

THE ENGLISH LEARNERS
SCHOOL L.I.F.E. PROGRAM
LEADERSHIP, INSTRUCTION, FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

TEMPLE
UNIVERSITY
College of Education

Wise Ways®

myths attributed to it. These sessions should be focused on early identification of bullying patterns as well as early intervention. Creating a social justice committee to ensure that clear behavior expectations are stated and consequences are laid out for the bullying and marginalization of ELs is an excellent preventative measure It has also been suggested that, in order to protect ELs from bullying in the classroom and at school, schools must keep a record of incidents overtime to help decide if a series of incidents are in fact bullying, inform parents and make them partners in resolving issues, and give clear explanations of incidents to school administrators and guidance counselors to determine the next steps to be taken (see Language Lizard, 2011).

Avoiding Disciplinary Discrimination
In a guide written for the Washington State Schools, Prohibiting Discrimination in Washington Public Schools, Beauchaine, Sechrist, Smithson, and Ryans (2012) recommend that schools conduct an annual review of student discipline data disaggregated by sex, race, English Language Learners, and disability (Section 504 and Special Education), to identify potential disparities in student discipline data. If discrimination in student discipline policies and practices are found, it is recommended that the school "takes action by training school staff on discipline procedures to ensure they are consistently applied, bias awareness training, and monitoring discipline data regularly" (p. 27).

Identifying and Avoiding Curriculum Bias
Curriculum bias can be addressed through the creation of a curriculum advisory committee comprised of ESL specialists, a school curriculum director, parents, and students (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006; Neely, 1994). According to the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), the inclusion of resources and perspectives of the community discriminated against in social studies classes, world and American history, geography, current events, civics and government, world religions and world literature, sociology, and psychology, constitutes a powerful solution to curriculum bias. Researchers have argued that, in order to eliminate bias, a screening criteria to identify and eliminate bias in instructional materials must be adopted and instructional materials committees must be established to monitor curriculum bias (Sandberg & Reschly, 2011; Wright, 2002). Lastly, because undocumented children have the right, under federal law, to attend American schools,

administrations should use non-discriminatory enrollment practices such as not requesting proof of citizenship (social security numbers, birth certificates, etc.), in order to avoid discouraging undocumented students from enrolling.

What factors should be included in an anti-bias response policy?

Procedures for reporting
All school personnel who come in contact with ELs must follow the process of reporting incidents implemented by the school in an urgent manner. Schools must empower ELs to share their concerns with designated school staff and encourage them to voice any suspicion of discrimination.

Investigation
It is important for school personnel to identify individuals who work closely with ELs daily and collaborate with them to assist with language barriers and to clear suspicions. EL teachers and speech therapists are typically good resources. School nurses and guidance counselors can also be great resources when starting an investigation, and can assist in interviewing students when necessary. Teachers must be ready to investigate allegations of bias if approached by students or parents (see American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, 2017) or, at least, follow the procedures set by the school, whether it is to contact the guidance counselor, principal, or another assigned individual. Allegations of peer bullying, teacher marginalization or discrimination, harassment, and other such incidents must be reported and dealt with swiftly

Responses
A first step in addressing bias is to share with school personnel the district's multicultural and antidiscrimination policies and regulations and designate personnel trained to recognize EL bias and to respond and report it suitably; if one does not exist, consider creating one. The State Department of Education is a good resource for doing so. In Washington State, for example, compliance coordinators are responsible for monitoring state and federal non-discriminatory laws, receiving and responding to complaints, and investigating complaints. They are expected to be proactive and provide professional development to ensure school staff understands their obligations under state and federal laws (see Beauchaine et al., 2012).

References

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. (2017). *Respond to incidents of discrimination in schools: How to respond to incidents of discrimination in schools–Advice to parents.* Retrieved from http://www.adc.org/education/respond-to-incidents-of-discrimination-in-schools/

Araujo, B. E. (2009). Best practices in working with linguistically diverse families. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 45*(2), 116–123.

Barnes, J. (2011, September 7). *Schools seeing shift on bullying: More students now willing to report it.* Retrieved from https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/regionals/south/2011/09/07/schools-seeing-shift-bullying/tkusYxMTR0th71bMwKZ43H/story.html

Beauchaine, S., Sechrist, C., Smithson, P. & Ryans, Y. (2012). *Prohibiting discrimination in Washington Public Schools: Guidelines for school districts to implement.* Retrieved from http://www.k12.wa.us/Equity/pubdocs/ProhibitingDiscriminationInPublicSchools.pdf

Cherubini, L., & Hodson, J. (2008). Ontario Ministry of Education policy and aboriginal learners' epistemologies: A fundamental disconnect. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 79*, 1–33.

Espelage, D. L., & Swearer, S. M. (2004). *Bullying in American schools: A social-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associations.

Francis, D. J., Rivera, M., Lesaux, N., Kieffer, M., & Rivera, H. (2006). *Practical guidelines for the education of English language learners: Research-based recommendations for instruction and academic interventions.* Houston, TX: Center on Instruction. Retrieved from http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/ELL1-Interventions.pdf

Frechette, J., & Haynes, J. (2010). Sticks and stones: Preventing bullying in the elementary school. In Dantas-Whitney, M. & Rilling, S. (Eds.), *Authenticity in the language classroom and beyond: Children and adolescent learners.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Kutoba, R., & Lin, A. (2006). Race and TESOL: Concepts, research, and future directions. *TESOL Quarterly, 40*(3), 471–493.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47–67.

Language Lizard. (2011). *8 tips to protect ELLs from bullying in your classroom and school* (n.d.). Washington, DC: ¡Colorín Colorado! Retrieved from http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/8-tips-protect-ells-bullying-your-classroom-and-school

Liggett, T. (2014). The mapping of a framework: Critical race theory and TESOL. *The Urban Review, 46*(1), 112–124.

Mah, R. (2009). *Getting beyond bullying and exclusion preK–5: Empowering children in inclusive classrooms.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin/Sage.

Ndura, E. (2004). ESL and cultural bias: An analysis of elementary through high school textbooks in the western United States of America. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 17*(2), 143–153.

Neely, D. E. (1994). Pedagogy of culturally biased curriculum in public education: An emancipatory paradigm for Afrocentric educational initiatives. *Capital University Law Review, 23*, 131–150.

Rose, C. A. (2011). Bullying among students with disabilities: Impact and implications. In D. L. Espelage & S. M. Swearer (Eds.), *Bullying in North American schools* (pp. 34–44). New York, NY: Routledge.

Ross, J.A. & Berger, M-J. (2009). Equity and leadership: Research-based strategies for school leaders. *School Leadership and Management, 29*(5), 461–474.

Pearson, C. M., & Navarro, J. (2012). *Bullying, ELLs, and the additional confound of disabilities: What are the problems, and what can be done about them?* Livonia, MI: Michigan Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

Salisbury, C. L. (2006). Principals' perspectives on inclusive elementary schools. *Research & Practice for Persons With Severe Disabilities, 31*(1), 70–82.

Sandberg, K. L., & Reschly, A. L. (2011). English learners: Challenges in assessment and the promise of curriculum-based measurement. *Remedial and Special Education, 32*(2), 144–154.

Suarez-Orozco, C., & Suarez-Orozco, M. M. (2001). *Children of Immigration*. Cambridge, MA: First Harvard University Press.

Yosso, T. J. (2002). Toward a critical race curriculum. *Equity and Excellence in Teaching, 35*(2), 93–107.

Witziers, B., Bosker, R. J., & Kruger, M. L. (2003). Educational leadership and student achievement: The elusive search for an association. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 39*(3), 398–425.

Wright, W. E. (2002). The effects of high stakes testing in an inner-city elementary school: The curriculum, the teachers, and the English language learners. *Current Issues in Education, 5*(5).