



ONE INSTRUCTIONAL STEP TOWARDS

EQUITY

IN THE CLASSROOM

The topic of equity has been increasingly discussed across school and community contexts. These conversations can involve thoughtful reflection and the sharing of ideas in a civil manner: but this is not always the case. “Critical Race Theory” is a controversial emerging topic in the public sphere which looks to approach the topic of equity.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) delves into the legal codification of racism in America. The central idea of CRT is that racism is institutionalized and embedded in every aspect of American life: our history, legal systems, and subsequent policies. CRT acknowledges and critiques the continuing impacts of slavery and segregation in America and how institutionalized racism perpetuates a caste system that is inherently unequal.

The debate over CRT is multifaceted and complex. Curricular decisions are influenced by many factors including local community perspectives. The voices of classroom teachers can help influence this debate. However, the decision over what curriculum to teach is beyond the independent authority of the classroom teacher.

Acknowledging these curricular considerations, classroom teachers have a direct and immediate impact on issues of equity in education in their classrooms every day. Curricular decisions related to issues of historical accuracy and equity are important, however, we must keep in mind that our instructional practices are as highly relevant to enhancing equity in both access and opportunity with our students.

One set of relevant instructional strategies in our classrooms to enhance equity involves providing opportunities for students to respond (OTRs) throughout lessons. Providing both depth and breadth of OTRs during instruction enhances student engagement in the curriculum. However, as important as it is to provide sufficient OTRs throughout instruction, we must also monitor our patterns of soliciting responses from our students. If we are not tuned in to our own instructional behavior when providing OTRs, we may further the gap of inequity that already exists in our schools.

Over the past few years, OTRs have been a frequent topic of conversation within this newsletter, most notably in the first volume published in Jan. 2020. Explicit guidance on the variety of ways as to how to incorporate OTRs in the classroom can be found on our website:

www.bloomu.edu/offices-directory/mcdowell-institute

Monitoring equitable student engagement through the provision of OTRs involves several interrelated factors. First, the nature of the OTR provided (e.g., the type of OTR such as individual or group responding coupled with the way the students should respond, either verbal or written) and secondly, the needs of each student (e.g., some students may benefit from a higher frequency of OTRs to address their specific needs). Given the interplay between these two factors, one equity-referenced approach would be to create

a user-friendly way to track student response rates. This can be helpful to best ensure that rates of student engagement align with your intent. For example, it is not uncommon for some students to be more prone to dominate responses when only one, or a few, that have raised their hands will be called upon to respond. This is one of the reasons why it is essential to offer different types of OTRs in the classroom (e.g., not solely relying upon hand raising and being called upon in response to a question posed to the entire class) One simple approach is to periodically monitor student response rates with a data collection sheet as depicted.

In this example you would simply need to record the frequency of student response within a targeted lesson. You can also adjust this approach to be more sensitive to not just frequency, but the type of OTR your students respond to, but it is best to keep your initial data collection simple. There is no set interval with which teachers should collect student response rate data. Less-experienced teachers may need to gather these types of data more frequently

Example of student response rate data collection sheet:

Lesson Title:	Today's Date:
STUDENT NAMES	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
Riley	///
Avery	
Tyler	////
Jordan	/

to inform their practice. Ultimately, it is important to match the frequency of such data collection to fit the situation at hand.

There is no one, single way in which teachers can enhance equity in access and opportunity. Rather, there are multiple approaches to consider. Utilizing student response data to OTRs represents one such strategy.

Effective Approaches to REDUCE CYBERBULLYING IN SCHOOLS

The prevalence of cyberbullying and its adverse impact on students' health and well-being has been a growing concern. While cyberbullying can occur during the school day on school grounds, it can also occur beyond the traditional school day and off school grounds. Unlike other forms of bullying behavior, cyberbullying can be a relentless experience.

To address growing concerns with cyberbullying, schools are implementing an array of approaches. In particular, the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) framework with embedded social emotional learning (SEL) continues to gain traction across schools with positive results. A recent large-scale survey study published in *School Psychology* examined how SEL-based school climate initiatives influenced experiences with cyberbullying across 39 middle and high schools in the state of Delaware. Yang and colleagues found that a lack of self-management and responsible decision-making skills were risk factors for engaging in cyberbullying. Lack of self-management was the stronger risk factor among female students as compared to male students. Lack of responsible decision-making skills was stronger among high school students as compared to middle school students. The key take-away for educators appears to be that installing frameworks, programs and practices that explicitly teach self-management along with responsible decision-making helps reduce risk factors associated with cyberbullying. Along with frameworks such as PBIS with embedded SEL, comprehensive cyberbullying prevention needs to reflect assessment and data-based monitoring of school climate.



Implementation of PBIS with embedded SEL has been increasingly encouraged by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) across schools for many years. Thousands of schools across the commonwealth report, with varying degrees of fidelity, to be employing this approach.

Implementation of PBIS with SEL also aligns with Pennsylvania's Career Ready Skills (PA CRS) that are being jointly promoted by PDE. The PA CRS addresses the social and emotional skills students need to empower themselves to successfully navigate relationships within their family, school, college, and/or career, as well as within the global marketplace. These skills include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The PA CRS continuum describes what students should know and be able to do from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The skills are organized by domain with related grade level band.

Infusing instruction in the PA CRS skills aligns with prevention of cyberbullying. However, the benefits in this regard also extend to positively impacting school climate when implemented in a manner reflecting multi-tiered logic (e.g., PBIS framework with embedded SEL). Aspiring educators, as well as seasoned veteran teachers, are encouraged to utilize the PA CRS to inform their instructional practices in their classrooms.

For more information on Schoolwide PBIS Sites in Pennsylvania, visit papbs.org

For more information on PA Career Ready Skills, visit www.education.pa.gov/K-12/CareerReadyPA/CareerReadySkills/Pages



Fostering Social Emotional Wellness with Students

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Loneliness, feelings of disconnect, devaluation, or not belonging, have been recognized as debilitating experiences for children, adolescents, and adults.

Even prior to our current experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic, research suggests that social isolation and loneliness may rival obesity and smoking as a threat to public health. Further, it is not unreasonable to relate reported increases in feelings of isolation and loneliness with the rise in mental health challenges along with abuse of alcohol and drugs, self-harm, and death by suicide.

These public health concerns have been further exacerbated by the pandemic and the angst associated with debate concerning vaccine requirements and mask mandates. In light of this we must refocus our attention on the basics of healthy social emotional growth and development within our schools. Specifically, social emotional learning (SEL) should be used along with 1) instructing students on forming healthy relationships and communication skills in concert with 2) understanding their own mental health must become cornerstones of education.

Implementing trauma-informed classroom-based strategies aligns with these priorities and are where the proverbial rubber meets the road with students. Several strategies can be used to meet these priorities. Strategies such as building rapport with an emphasis on students that appear disconnected, providing clarity of expectations that reflect SEL in alignment with Pennsylvania's Career Ready Skills, and providing an array of opportunities for students to respond throughout instruction coupled with high levels of behavior specific praise are effective.

These trauma-informed practices are essential in each and every classroom. However, educators, particularly teachers, are isolated in their respective classrooms and can only move the needle on the pendulum so far through their instructional practices as curricular decisions are made at the district level. Acknowledging where decision-making authority rests coupled with our most recent experiences with the pandemic provides an opportunity to re-think not only virtual and hybrid delivery of instruction, but also what is taught. This may appear a bit radical on the surface, but in light of the public health concerns previously noted in tandem with the reality that academic achievement is directly influenced by the social emotional wellbeing of students, it is logical. If you question this observation, simply ask classroom teachers, parents of students, and the students themselves.

So, you might ask, "What is suggested?" Well, a good starting point is reflection and discussion. The process of making curricular adjustment is typically an arduous process, and for good reasons. Deliberative thought and discussion need to occur before any form of sustainable, significant change is implemented. However, the recommended starting point for those deliberations should consider how the social emotional wellbeing of students serves as a central tenant for growth and development including, but not limited to, academic achievement.

It has been increasingly noted that education has been permanently changed as a result of the pandemic. These changes in instructional approach that shape the landscape of education provide an ideal opportunity to rethink not just how we teach, but as well, what we teach. Curriculum and instruction is inextricably connected. The question we must ask ourselves is: will we collectively seize the opportunity for such reflection and courageous conversations?

MCDOWELL UPDATES

Micro-Credentials Officially Launched and Act 48 Approved

Micro-credentials through the McDowell Institute are officially available to both pre- and in-service educators as well as individuals from related human services fields. Act 48 credit through the Pennsylvania Department of Education for in-service educators is available upon successful completion of these micro-credentials. These learning experiences are virtual and asynchronous. They are research-based and reflect state-of-the-art practices designed to be:

PERSONALIZED | Create your own learning journey, based on your interests and career goals

FLEXIBLE | Asynchronous which allows you to study, learn and grow when it is convenient for you

PERFORMANCE-BASED | Relevant micro-credentials are awarded based on demonstrated expertise

Four topically specific micro-credentials have been in development throughout the late spring and early summer 2021. Currently, two are open for enrollment including:

Bullying Prevention (*comprised of five, distinct bullying prevention micro-credentials*): Bullying Prevention in PK Programs, K–4 Programs, Middle School, High Schools, and Comprehensive Bullying Prevention PK–12. Each of these micro-credentials highlight effective approaches to both prevent bullying in schools and methods to mitigate the adverse effects of bullying behavior.

Youth Suicide Prevention: Highlights the increasing rise of youth mental health challenges, the relationship between risk and protective factors associated with suicide risk, decoding signs and symptoms of mental health challenges, responding to youth in emotional distress, and applying multi-tiered logic to youth suicide prevention endeavors. Additionally, this micro-credential provides a certificate from Prevent Suicide PA upon completion of the Suicide Prevention for Educators asynchronous virtual gatekeeper training.

Please go to the McDowell Institute website for additional information and to register for a micro-credential.



Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Trainings for COE Students

YMHFA trainings have been conducted throughout the Fall 2021 semester for education majors enrolled in targeted advance sequence COE courses in preparation for student teaching. By the end of the fall semester, 130 aspiring educators at BU will complete this important training. A second training is planned for the upcoming Spring 2022 semester with a parallel targeted course process. Students enrolled in targeted courses at the beginning of the Spring 2022 semester will receive an email from Charlotte Heckman outlining the pre-registration process. YMHFA training must be completed by these students as outlined in the email. For questions about YMHFA training, contact Charlotte Heckman (checkman@bloomu.edu).

Embedding Trauma-informed Approaches in Educator Preparation Across the Commonwealth

The McDowell Institute is in the final stages of implementing its externally funded initiative to advance educator preparation across the commonwealth. Thirty institutions, including Bloomsburg University, with educator preparatory programs have engaged in this initiative over the past four years to embed trauma-informed approaches within their programs in accordance with required competencies delineated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. This initiative has positively impacted over 5,000 aspiring educators across these institutions through youth suicide prevention training and virtual resources on trauma-informed classroom practices. In turn, these educators will impact the lives of thousands of PK-12 students in the near future. The numbers of aspiring educators, as well as their respective students, impacted in the future will continue to grow over time as a result of the sustainable infrastructures and embedded curricula established across these institutions.

MCDOWELL UPDATES

Support for BU Student Teachers Fall 2021

The McDowell Institute has continued to provide professional development with ongoing access to virtual office hours throughout the Fall 2021 semester for BU student teachers. Sessions began on August 23 with a brief refresher on trauma-informed preventative classroom management. This refresher emphasized positive behavior support across virtual, traditional, and hybrid classroom settings. Additionally, student teachers have continued to have access to support for matters related to the social emotional wellness of their students as well as themselves throughout their student teaching placement.

Unique PDE Endorsement in Social- Emotional- Behavioral Wellness PK-12 Students

Bloomsburg University's College of Education is one of only seven institutions of higher education that has been approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to offer the Endorsement in Social Emotional Behavioral Wellness with PK-12 Students. The number of BU undergraduate and graduate students accessing this unique endorsement which enhances trauma-informed skills and employability continues to grow. Undergraduate students enrolled in a preparatory educator program that are interested in exploring this PDE endorsement should contact Dr. Stephanie Gardner (sgardner@bloomu.edu) and graduate students with a similar interest are encouraged to contact Dr. Robin Drogan (rdrogan@bloomu.edu).

JED Campus Initiative Update

JED Campus endeavors to build mental health literacy and support for students continue to move forward on campus. These efforts align with Act 110, Suicide Prevention in Institutions of Higher Education, that was enacted in the commonwealth in 2018. Act 110, which is voluntary for institutions of higher education, in many ways parallels requirements for PK-12 schools concerning youth suicide prevention with ACT 71. One outreach endeavor of the JED process includes encouraging BU faculty to include the following statement in their course outlines for the upcoming Spring 2022 semester:

Bloomsburg University cares about your personal health and well-being. Experiencing difficulties associated with your health and well-being can promote an unhealthy level of stress which can adversely affect many facets of your life, such as your relationships, self-care, learning and academic success. Throughout your time at BU you or someone you know may experience a range of stressful situations... some of which may even create impediments to your success. Stressful circumstances such as illness, strained



relationships, trauma, anxiety, alcohol or drug problems, and feeling down or depressed should not be ignored. The Student Counseling Center, as well as the Student Health Center, are available to help you navigate these difficult situations in order to help mitigate their impact. Help is available. Please reach out as needed.

An additional outreach endeavor involved the dissemination of three brief videos pertaining to the social emotional wellness of our students developed by the McDowell Institute. Each video runs about four minutes in length and provides background information concerning 1) the prevalence of mental health challenges and an understanding of risk and protective factors, 2) signs and symptoms associated with mental health challenges, and 3) what to do if you have concerns about a student.

All three videos are available on the McDowell Institute website under the Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Wellness Videos Tab.

"Social Emotional wellness of our Students 101-Part 1"

"Social Emotional wellness of our Students 101-Part 2"

"Social Emotional wellness of our Students 101-Part 3"

To learn about or access the free, confidential mental health services available on campus simply call **570-389-4255** or visit **www.bloomu.edu/offices-directory/counseling-and-human-development**.

To learn about or access the services of the BU Health Center call **570-389-4451** or visit **www.bloomu.edu/offices-directory/healthy-husky**

MCDOWELL UPDATES

Research on Educator Preparedness to Recognize and Address Trauma Across Pennsylvania's Schools

The McDowell Institute recently disseminated their findings from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) research initiative on school climate they were awarded. The research team conducted a Qualtrics-based survey of educators across the commonwealth to ascertain their preparedness in recognizing and responding to students impacted by trauma or experiencing emotional distress. The survey yielded a total of 4,793 responses from educators across Pennsylvania. The survey suggests that one out of

every two educators who responded did not feel adequately prepared to recognize signs of trauma in their students. Additionally, three out of four teachers responded that they did not feel adequately prepared to implement trauma-informed approaches in their teaching. These findings align with results from a multi-state national survey, that did not include Pennsylvania educators, by Kognito (2020). The final report can be accessed at the McDowell Institute website.



McDowell Institute Fall Event

On Sept. 22, 2021, the McDowell Institute provided a series of events focused on addressing the social, emotional, and behavioral wellness of students in PK-12 settings. The afternoon offered a series of trauma-informed practices professional development sessions including:

- Translating Trauma-informed Practice into the Classroom: The Baker's Dozen
- Exploring Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills
- PDE Award on Educator Preparedness to Recognize and Address Trauma and Emotional Distress

The evening highlighted an open discussion with Susan McDowell, Dean Daryl Fridley, and Danielle Empson on the mission, impact, and future outreach of the McDowell Institute.