

Equity in Action Resource: Bias-Based Beliefs Reflection

This resource stems from a 2020/21 REL West project, Equity in Action, in which five California district equity teams engaged in an equity-focused process—learning, reflecting, collecting data, analyzing data, and planning—to address racial inequities in the district. While engaging in the eight-month project, the district equity teams developed capacity to apply new skills and knowledge toward changing inequitable district policies and practices.

Purpose: This activity increases awareness of bias-based beliefs helping leaders and educators identify them and the inequities they perpetuate and adopt appropriate behaviors and practices that are aligned to the mission and vision of their equity work.

Intended Audience: This activity is designed for either individual reflection or group and team conversations.

Description: This foundational activity includes a link to an article (Fergus, 2019) and a reflection protocol to guide individuals or a team through examination of their own biased-based beliefs and behaviors and how they frame a systems' policies, procedures, and practices to establish commitments to address bias-based beliefs and guide accountability within equity efforts. This material was developed for REL West's Equity in Action coaching project for five districts, each engaged in addressing a racial inequity in their district.

References

Fergus, E. (2019). Confronting our beliefs about poverty and discipline. *PhiDeltaKappan*, 100(5), 31–34. Retrieved October 6, 2021, from <https://kappanonline.org/confronting-beliefs-poverty-race-school-discipline-fergus/>

EQUITY IN ACTION: BIAS-BASED BELIEFS REFLECTION¹

Purpose: This article helps to ground understanding of: 1) the relationship between bias and the individuals' beliefs; 2) how bias-based beliefs shape the actions and behaviors of individuals and groups; and 3) frame systems' policies, procedures, and practices that impact students and families we serve as educators. An increased awareness of bias-based beliefs helps leaders and educators identify them and the inequities they perpetuate and adopt appropriate behaviors and practices that are aligned to the mission and vision of their equity work.

Recommended Practice: This article offers language to describe bias and beliefs, resources, and entry points to engage meaningfully in equity and disproportionality work. For individuals, this article can help guide self-examination and provide recommendations and insights for addressing and reframing bias-based beliefs. For groups and teams, this article can initiate conversations around the prevalence of bias and bias-based beliefs in their contexts and work, unpacking systemic practices and policies, and establish commitments to address bias-based beliefs and guide accountability within equity efforts.

Step 1: Read the article [Confronting Our Beliefs About Poverty and Discipline](#) by Dr. Edward Fergus

Step 2: Once you've completed the reading, consider the following questions:

- What connections were strongest for you as you read?
- What were new insights that you gained from the article? What would you like to learn more about?
- How often do you hear beliefs like those expressed in the article? How are they typically addressed?
- Based on what you've learned from the article, how might you respond to bias-based beliefs in your professional context?
- In what ways might you check for bias-based beliefs and assumptions in your decision-making and within groups you engage?
- What might be shared and/or collective beliefs that are barriers for students within your professional context?
- How might you apply this learning to a policy or practice in your organization?

¹ Resource provided during presentation: Browder, E., & Van Houten, L. (2021, June). *Equity in action: Targeted improvement efforts toward racial equity in five school districts* (presentation materials). Arizona Leading Change Conference.