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Dismantling Explicit Bias to Ensure Equity for All Children

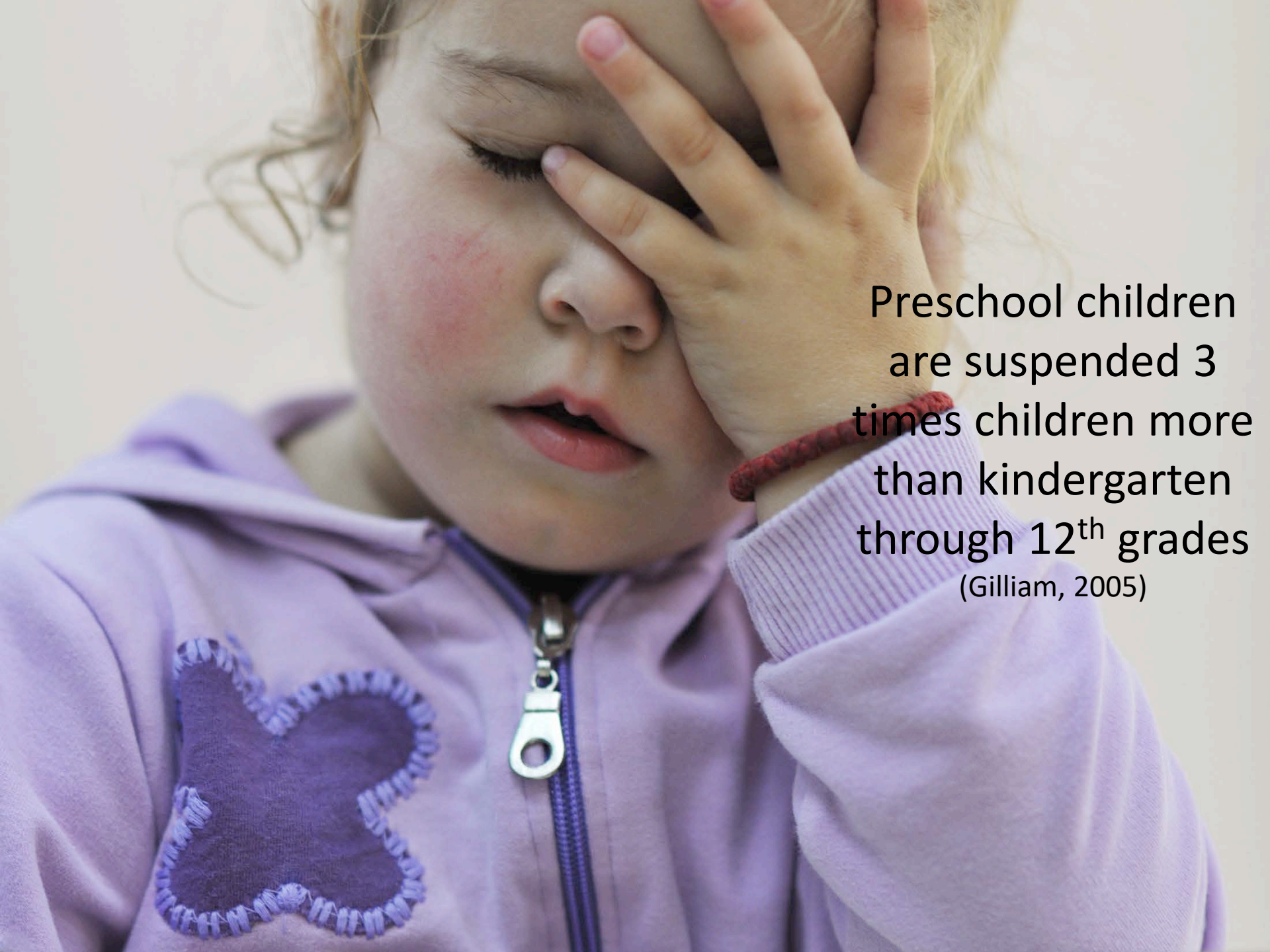
These are all our  
children. We will  
profit by, or pay for,  
whatever they become.

James Baldwin



Young children  
are being  
suspended and  
expelled from  
preschool at  
alarming rates.





Preschool children  
are suspended 3  
times children more  
than kindergarten  
through 12<sup>th</sup> grades  
(Gilliam, 2005)



***Suspension:*** a “disciplinary action that is administered as a consequence of a student’s inappropriate behavior, requires that a student absent him/herself from the classroom or from the school for a specified period of time” (Morrison and Skiba, 2001, p. 174).



# What is a suspension?



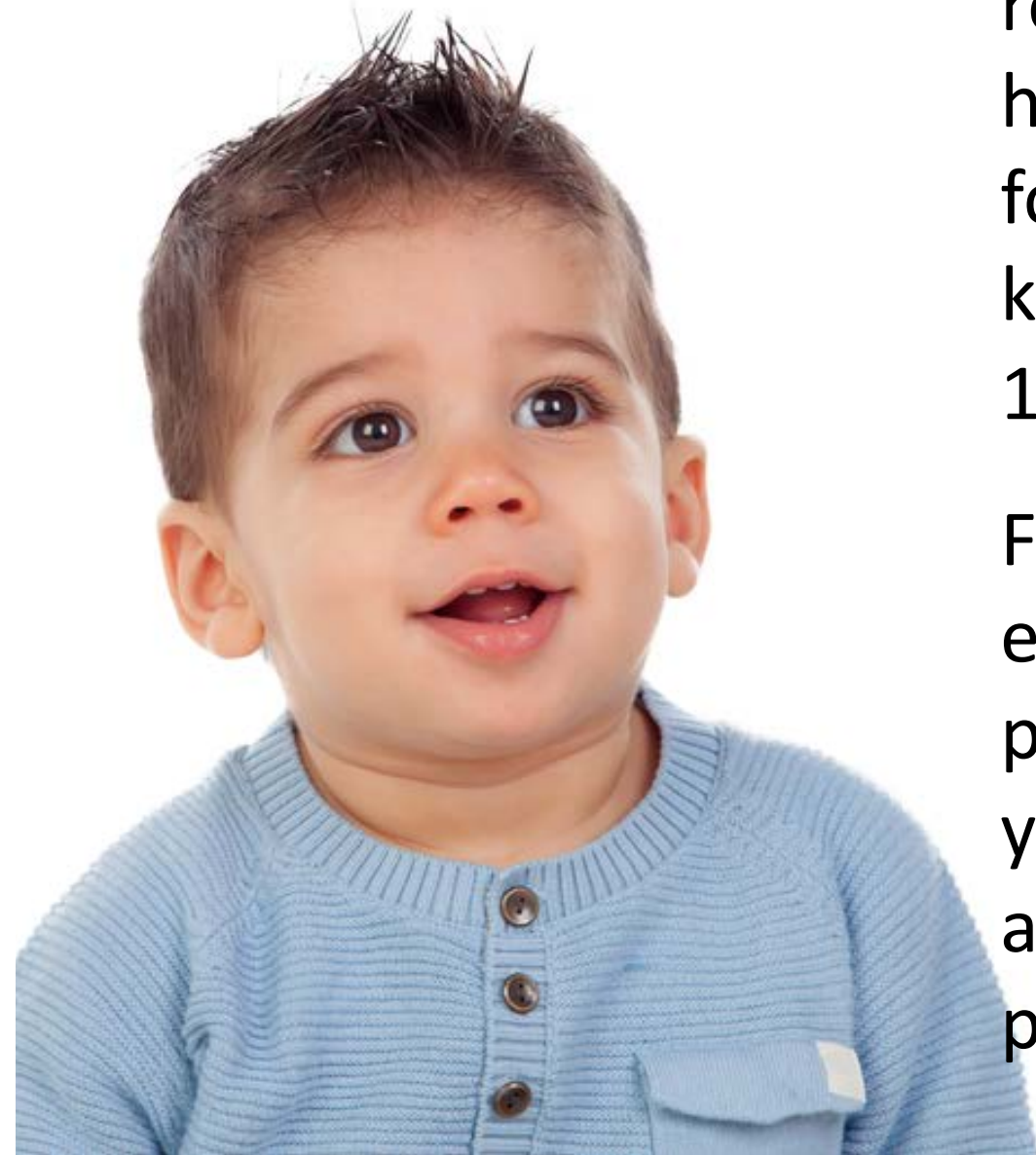
- Excluding a child from the learning process; from the classroom: from the school premises
- Student is sent home early
- Child is placed on a modified schedule
- Student is not a “good fit” and asked to leave the school/program



# What is Disproportionality?

Disproportionality occurs when one group is overrepresented or underrepresented in a particular situation or category, compared the percentage of that group in the general population (Coutinho, 2006).





There has been extensive research on suspensions however; most studies focus on children in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

Few studies have examined disciplinary practices for children younger than 5 years of age in early childhood programs.



The Civil Rights Data Collection (2014) included preschool data FOR THE 1<sup>ST</sup> time. It included the number of preschool children who:

- had at least one out-of-school suspension,
- had more than one suspension,
- was expelled, and
- received corporal punishment.

# The OCR (2014) Patterns of racial and gender disproportionality:

- Boys were 79% of the preschool population but 82% of all suspensions.



(United States Department of Education, 2014)



# The OCR (2014)

## Patterns of racial and gender disproportionality:

- African Americans were 18 percent of the preschool population, but comprised 48% of suspensions



(United States Department of Education, 2014)

- Children with disabilities were also suspended

(United States Department of Education, 2014)



# The OCR (2016) Patterns of racial and gender disproportionality:

- Boys represent 54% of the preschool population but 78% of those suspended.



# The OCR (2016) Patterns of racial and gender disproportionality:

- African American preschoolers are 3.6 times more likely to be suspended than their White peers.

(United States Department of Education, 2016)





## The OCR (2016)

African American girls are 20% of preschool female population but 54% of girls suspended from preschool

(United States Department of Education, 2016)



# The OCR (2018)

## Patterns of racial and gender disproportionality:

- Boys are 54% of the preschool population but more than three-quarters of those who were spanked or paddled, and 81 percent of the preschoolers who were suspended more than once.





# **The New OCR (2018) Patterns of racial and gender disproportionality:**

- **African American preschoolers are 19% of the preschool populations and comprise 46% of suspensions.**

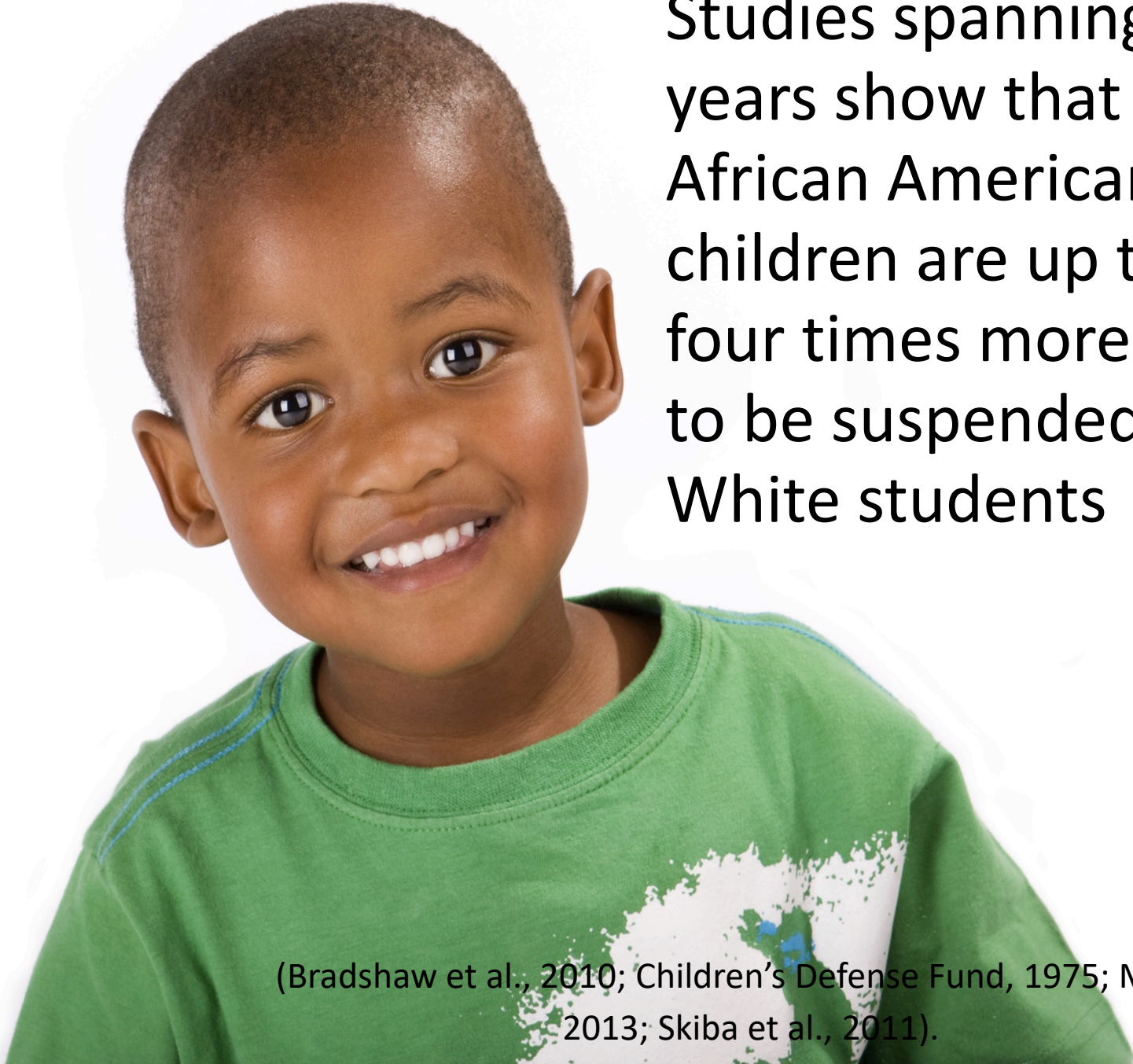


First  
suspension  
Study 1975



Children's  
Defense  
Fund



A young African American boy with short, dark hair is smiling at the camera. He is wearing a green t-shirt with a white graphic on the front. The background is white with faint, light blue outlines of the continents of Africa and South America.

Studies spanning 40  
years show that  
African American  
children are up to  
four times more likely  
to be suspended than  
White students

(Bradshaw et al., 2010; Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Milner, 2013; Skiba et al., 2011).

In Illinois, 40% of  
child care providers  
reported  
suspending infants  
and toddlers.  
Those are babies  
that are still in  
diapers!



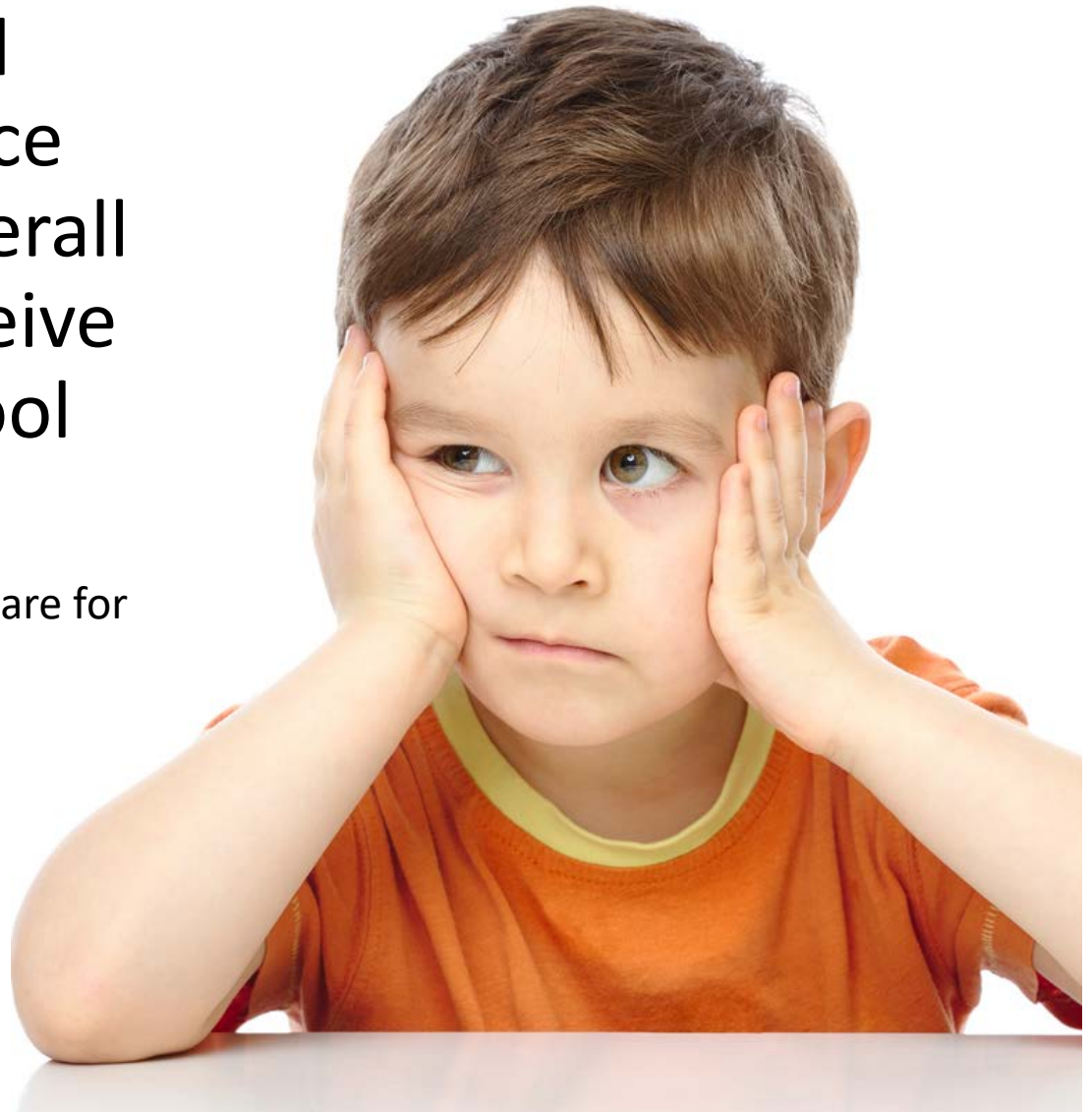


In North Dakota,  
20% of ECE  
programs expelled  
children. Of those  
expelled, 53% were  
infants and toddlers  
and 31% were  
preschool children.

(North Dakota State Data Center,  
2008).

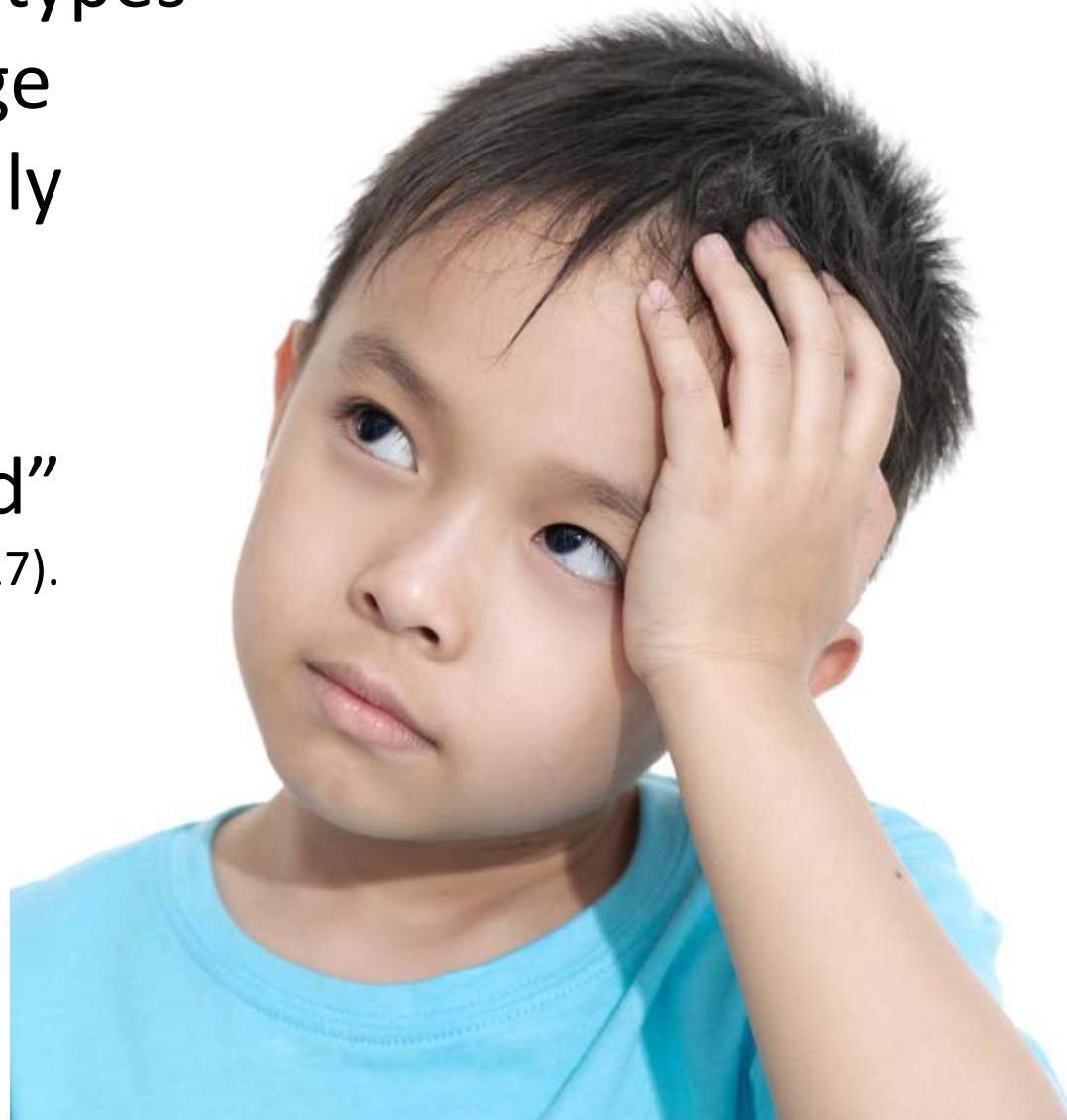


Children in special education are twice as likely as the overall population to receive either out-of-school or in-school suspensions (Texans Care for Children, 2018).



Nationally, “across all types of settings, the average school day sees roughly 250 instances of a preschooler being suspended or expelled”

(Center for American Progress, 2017).





I was one of  
those  
children!

I was  
suspended at  
least 7 times a  
year from the  
time I started  
school.

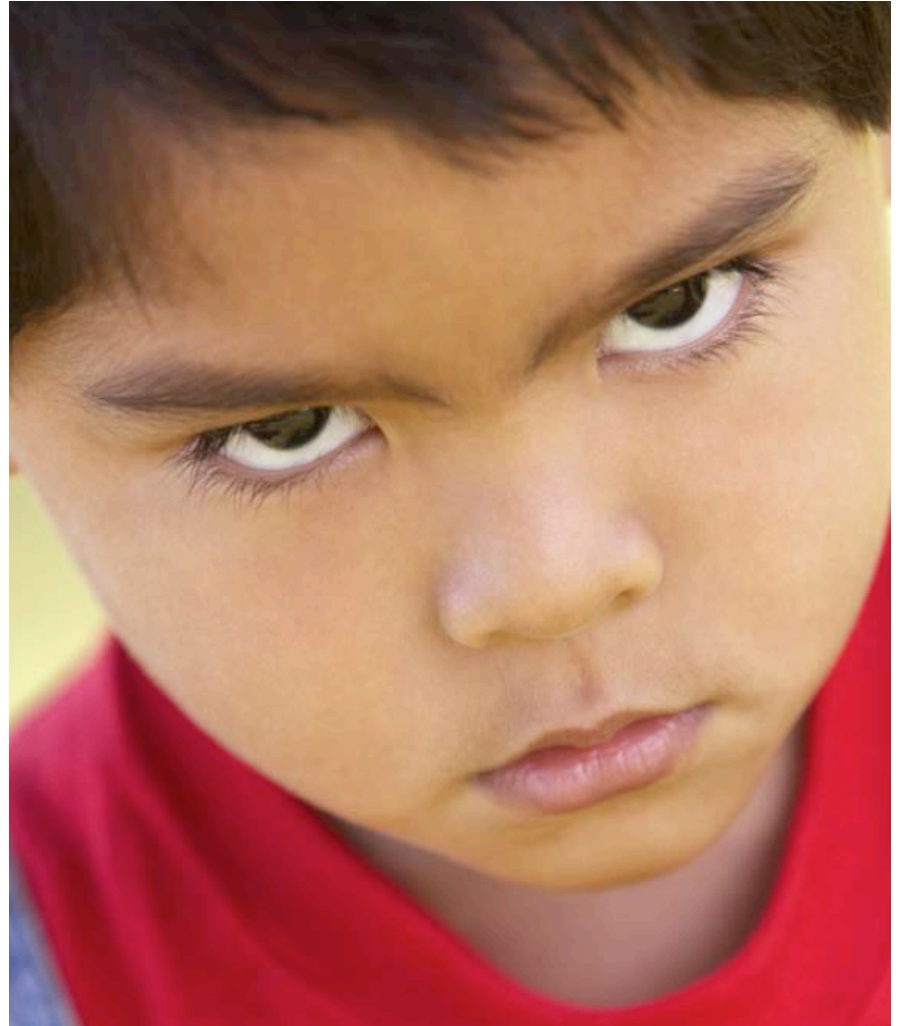


Why Does This Happen??



Teachers do not feel  
they have the tools to  
address challenging  
behaviors in early  
childhood classrooms

(Hemmeter et al., 2006; Joseph, Strain, &  
Skinner, 2004).





Let's look at  
behaviors-

What do children do  
when they get  
upset?









What do adults do when they  
get upset?

We can  
expect  
children to  
be children

As adults,  
what's our  
excuse?



What if we shift our focus from  
children's behaviors to the behavior of  
*adults.*



Photo Credit:



What if my teachers saw me  
as a geologist rather than  
being destructive?

As a topographer with an  
interest in creating maps,  
rather than incorrigible?

What if they saw me as a  
scientist rather than a  
demon?

Or as a doctor, specializing in  
anatomy rather than a sexual  
pervert?





# Suspensions: A Tool or a Weapon?





# Our Focus Must Be on:

Promise

Potential

Possibility



THE key to managing  
the difficult behaviors  
of young children is to  
shift our thinking to  
manage our own  
behaviors and  
responses to behaviors.







The behavior we give  
the most attention to is  
the behavior we  
promote.





Young children who are suspended are

- 10 times likely to end up in the juvenile justice system.
- Drop out of school,
- Become disengaged from the learning process,
- And are likely to be suspended again and again.

And THIS is where the  
Preschool to PRISON pipeline  
begins

(Center for American Progress, 2017).

Children rise to the expectations of the teacher, whether it's positive or negative.



We must be self-aware.

We must OURSELVES.







**HOT**

- Awareness of our behavior and responses to the behavior of others
- Recognize our own hot buttons and when they're pushed
- WHAT children are we responding to and why
- Our body language



Behavior. Is.  
Defined. By. The.  
Person. Most.  
Annoyed. By. It.





- Observation of Raphael
- She called his name 27 times in 7 minutes.
- What struck me was Raphael was engaging the same behaviors as other children,
- It appeared that RAPHAEL was her hot button
- She was teaching children how to treat Raphael!



# What About Disproportionality? Why Does This Happen?





December, 2016, the US Department of Education provided guidance on addressing Significant Disproportionality to ensure equity in IDEA by tracking disproportionality.



# Implicit Bias



# IMPLICIT BIAS

- Implicit bias is the mental process resulting in feelings and attitudes about people based race, age and appearance.
- It is an unconscious process and we are not consciously aware of the negative racial biases that develop over the course of our lifetime.
- Implicit bias supports stereotypes such as Black males dangerous.

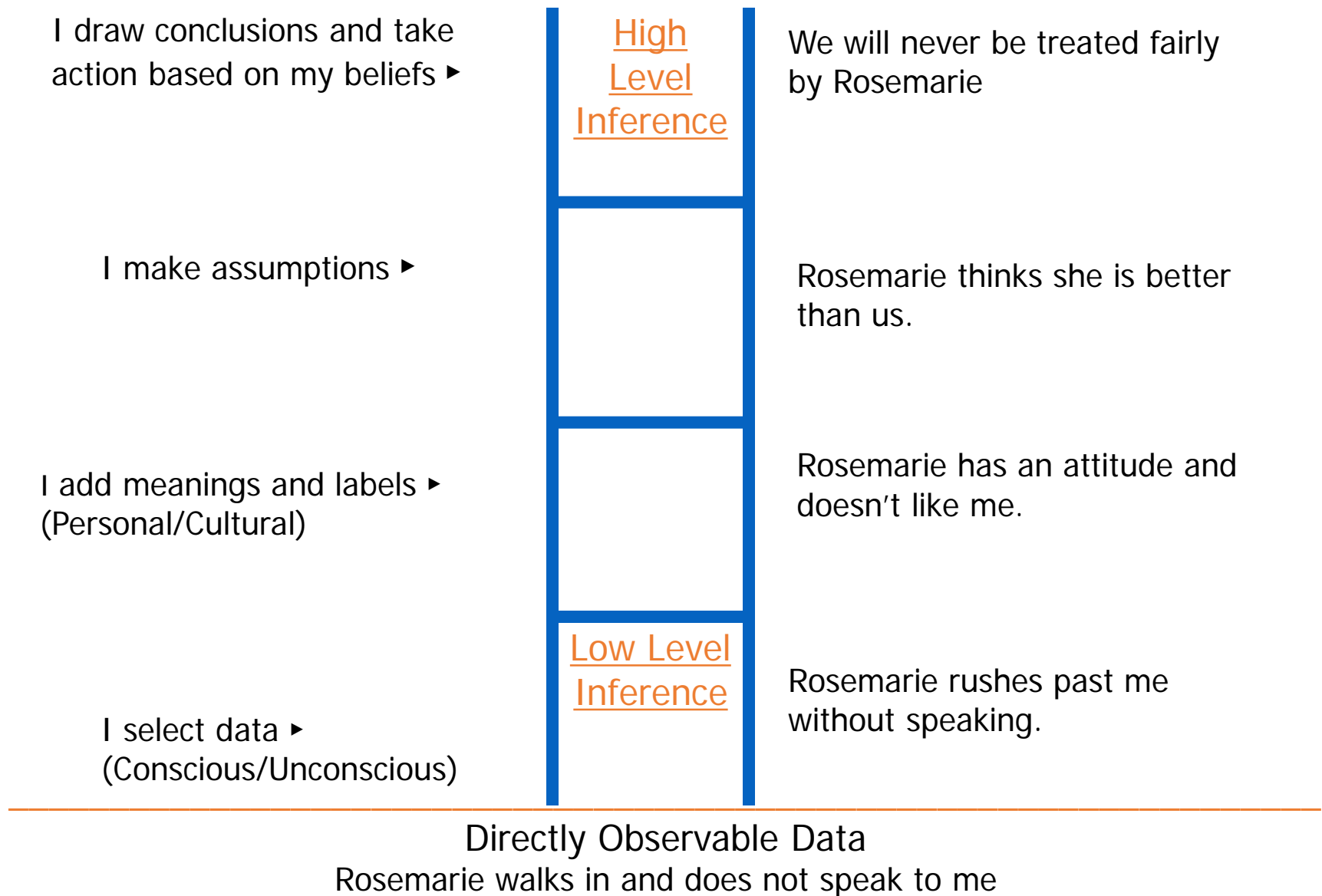
# THE LADDER OF INFERENCE



Peter Senge - from *The Fifth Discipline*



# Ladder of Inference



# Ladder of Inference

I draw conclusions and take action based on my beliefs ►

High Level Inference

I know we're going to have to put him on a behavioral plan

I make assumptions ►

He's probably aggressive with the other children.

I add meanings and labels ►  
(Personal/Cultural)

I think he has an attitude, I'd better watch him.

I select data ►  
(Conscious/Unconscious)

Low Level Inference

This child is pretty big and rough

---

Directly Observable Data

# Ladder of Inference

I draw conclusions and take action based on my beliefs ►

High Level Inference

I know this student is going to be a problem and the parents won't be much help

I make assumptions ►

I assume that she comes from a family that doesn't value manners, education, or school very much.

I add meanings and labels ►  
(Personal/Cultural)

I think this is disrespectful.

I select data ►  
(Conscious/Unconscious)

Low Level Inference

I notice that child did not use Ms. to address me.

---

Directly Observable Data

My student won't address me by "Ms." in class.



# IMPLICIT BIAS

Implicit bias is the mental process resulting in feelings and attitudes about people based race, age and appearance.

It is an unconscious process and we are not consciously aware of the negative racial biases that develop over the course of our lifetime.



# KIRWAN INSTITUTE RESEARCH

It is important to understanding the **causes** of implicit racial bias and **intentionally** work to bring it to the conscious level in order to mitigate the negative consequences.



# Implicit Bias

Hidden

- Implicit racial bias resides in our “unconscious mind,” the part of the brain that many researchers believe is beyond our direct control

Less  
Egalitarian

- Unconscious attitudes are less egalitarian than what we explicitly think about race

Self-  
reinforcing

- Our refusal to talk about and confront issues of race reinforces implicit racial bias

**Tom Rudd, Kirwan Institute for the  
Study of Race and Ethnicity**



# Why Don't We Want to Talk About Race?

“We have become so politically correct that we don't know what to say and when to say it. We don't know what to say to anyone anymore.”

*Lee Jones, Florida State University.*

- Racial Etiquette: Not polite to discuss that which makes us uncomfortable (Omi and Winant, 2002).
- Saying “We’re all the same”, or “I don’t see color” fails to acknowledge difference others experience (Harries, 2014).





Black

Negro

Colored

Afr. Am.



# Danger of Color-blind ideology



## Color Blind Ideology:

Issues of equity  
are often  
avoided by  
adopting a  
colorblind  
ideology



Racial blindness promotes the fallacy that people are beyond bias and racism, ignores racial disparities, and places blame on the behaviors of communities of color



# Personal & Cultural Beliefs Shape Attitudes About Challenging Behaviors

- Look at your “Hot Buttons”
- Where might there be cultural disconnects?





# Cultural Disconnects

- Most children don't come to school knowing what teachers expect them to do.
- Most teachers are not aware of the cultural expectations of the child at home.
- This could be the child's first experience in outside of home and family.
- There may be differences in families' and teachers' expectations of children's behavior.



# Cultural Disconnects



Lead to  
disproportionality in  
disciplinary practices



**DIFFERENT IS NOT DEFICIT**

# What is Culture?



## **Culture:**

- The way we live
- Values, mores, customs
- Behavioral expectations
- Belief Systems
- Communication styles
- Traditions that are shared and passed between generations





## Culture impacts the way children:

- Learn
- Cope
- Solve problems
- Communicate

Viewing the child through this cultural context provides an understanding of the child and the factors that influence behaviors

(Gay, Geneva 2010. Culturally Responsive Teaching)



- How do we ensure this little girl's sweet spirit is embraced?
- How do we honor who she is in our classrooms?

# Elements: Of Culture At School



**We must be aware of our own cultural framework and context**

Kozleski, (2010). Culturally Responsive Teaching Matters! Equity Alliance

# Culture: Everyone has one!

- We must recognize the culture of we bring with us.
- White people must also recognize they have a culture.
- We must avoid “othering” those whose culture is different from ours so that they are not viewed as outsiders.





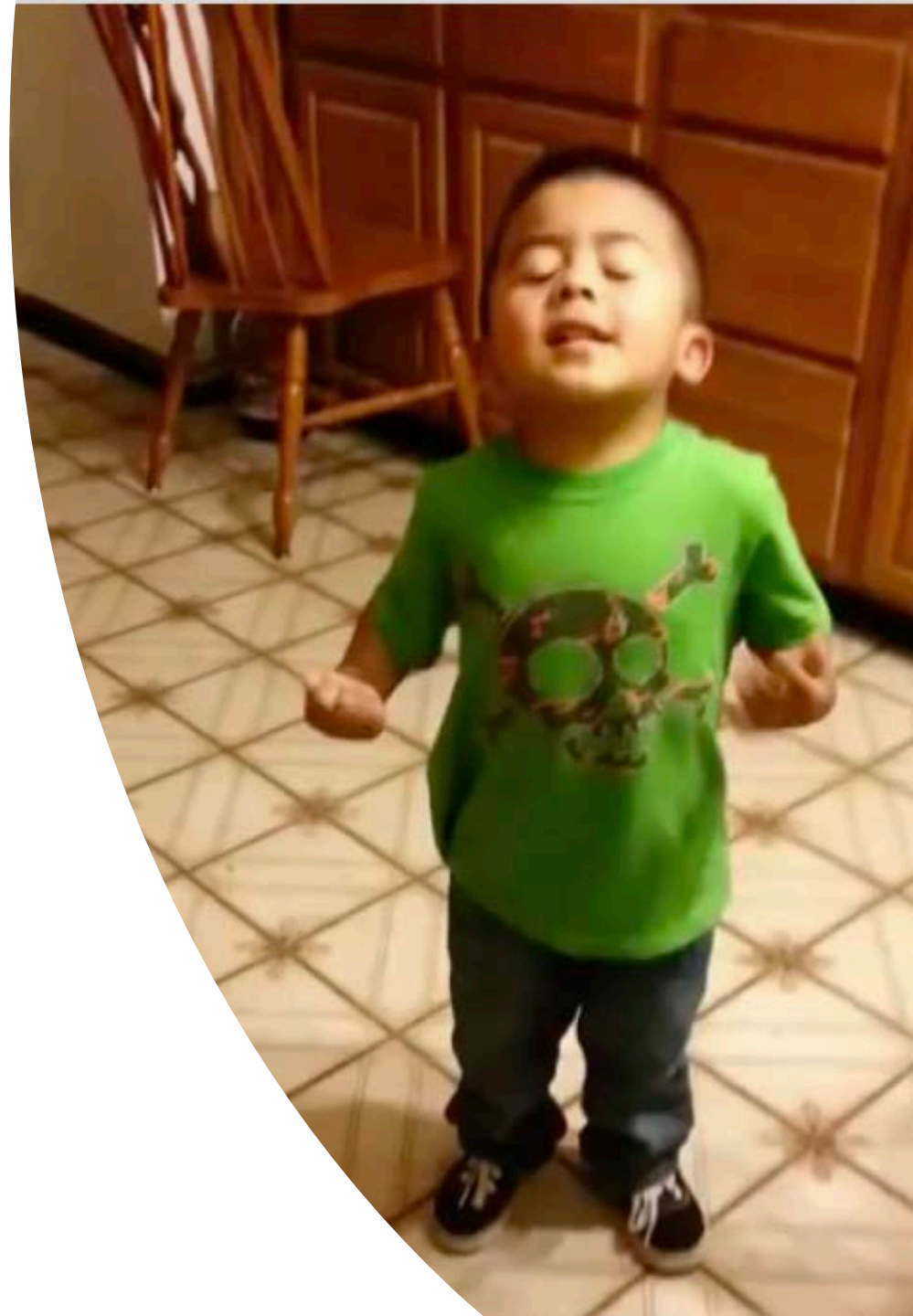
# The Cultural Background We Bring With Us:



Kozleski, Elizabeth (2010). Culturally Responsive Teaching Matters! Equity Alliance

How do we honor Mateo in our classroom without breaking his spirit?

How Do We Ensure the Success for Mateo?





Using Culturally Responsive Practices





Cultural congruence between the child's home and school is the cornerstone of culturally responsive practices (Joseph & Strain, 2010; Monroe, 2010).

Developing a child-centered, culturally relevant, affirming and supportive environment decreases the incidents of challenging behaviors in early childhood settings (Bal, Thorius & Kozleski, 2012; Fox & Hemmeter, 2009; James, 2013; Powell, Dunlap & Fox, 2006).



Effective implementation of culturally responsive practices requires professional development activities that include knowledge of:

- implicit bias and its impact on decision making,
- culturally responsive practices and how to implement the practices in the classroom,
- the role of critical reflection in challenging assumptions, as well as interpreting, understanding and reframing experiences

(Brookefield, 1995; Delpit, 2012; Gay, 2002; Mezirow, 2003).



I wish my teacher  
knew how much I miss  
my dad because he got  
DePorted to Mexico when  
I was 3 years old and  
I haven't seen  
him in 6 years. I wish  
my teacher knew

# Culturally Responsive Practices

***Centers child's cultural authenticity:***

- Identity
- Agency
- Lived experiences

James Earl Davis, 2018



# Culturally Responsive Strengths-Based Approach

- Teachers focus on what children
  - Know
  - Understand
  - Can do.
- Teachers know children's
  - Strengths
  - Gifts
  - Talents

Wright & Counsell, 2018





# 7 Principles of Culturally Responsive Practices



# Principle One

**“Kids get it, that we get them”**



## ***Children are honored in their cultural connections***

- The children are represented in:
  - Routines and Activities
  - Stories
  - People
  - Visuals
- Children feel honored recognized and seen

## Principle Two

**“Kids get it, that we like them”**



# **Teachers are personally culturally inviting:**

- Kids understand that we enjoy them and enjoy being with them
- Teachers have comfortable and positive conversations with children about cultural traditions and activities.
- Teachers develop personal, meaningful and positive relationships with each child.



## Principle Three

*"School looks like me"*



## • Classrooms are physically and culturally inviting

- Children's families are represented in the classroom in photos, family books, bulletin board.
- Pictures, books, games, reflect the culture of the children
- Children's work is attractively displayed.



## Principle Four

“Catch kids being good”

## Children’s development and efforts are reinforced



- Teachers see children from a strength-based lens.
- Teachers look for and acknowledge the positive behaviors of children.
- Children are perceived as smart and capable learners.

## Principle Five

“Singing in harmony  
with the kid’s song”



## **Strategies are adjusted to meet the needs of unique learning and cultural styles of the children**

- Children do not have to change who they are to fit into the program.
- Creating program-wide rules that are consistent with the family’s cultural expectations.
- Using strategies that are congruent with the child’s family and community.

## Principle Six

“Respect begins with the teacher”



# Guidance is caring and consistent

- Children are intentionally taught culturally appropriate prosocial skills and emotional competencies
- Children are taught ***program-wide*** expectations
- Expectations are clear, implemented consistently, and reinforced regularly
- Guidance is instructive, not punitive

## Principle Seven

“Child-Centered  
Learning”



## Instruction is individual as well collective

- Friendship skills are taught and reinforced
- Teachers individualize instruction based on child needs.
- Teachers support peers in helping their friends learn and practice social skills



# Diversity Fatigue

It is defined as a form of mental exhaustion brought on by the constant attention required to ensure diversity, inclusion, and equity in the workplace and at all levels of society.



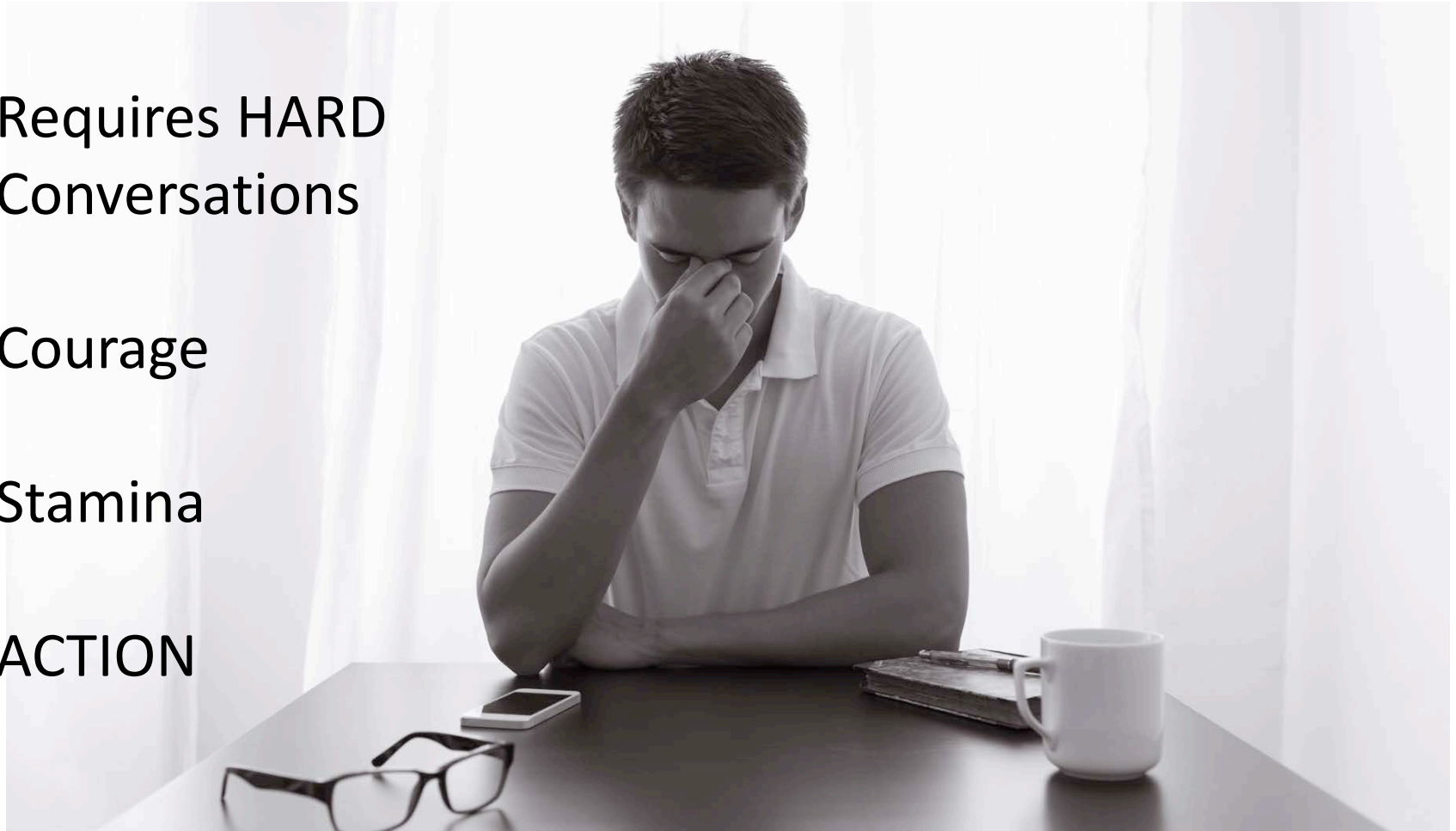
# This is hard work

Requires HARD  
Conversations

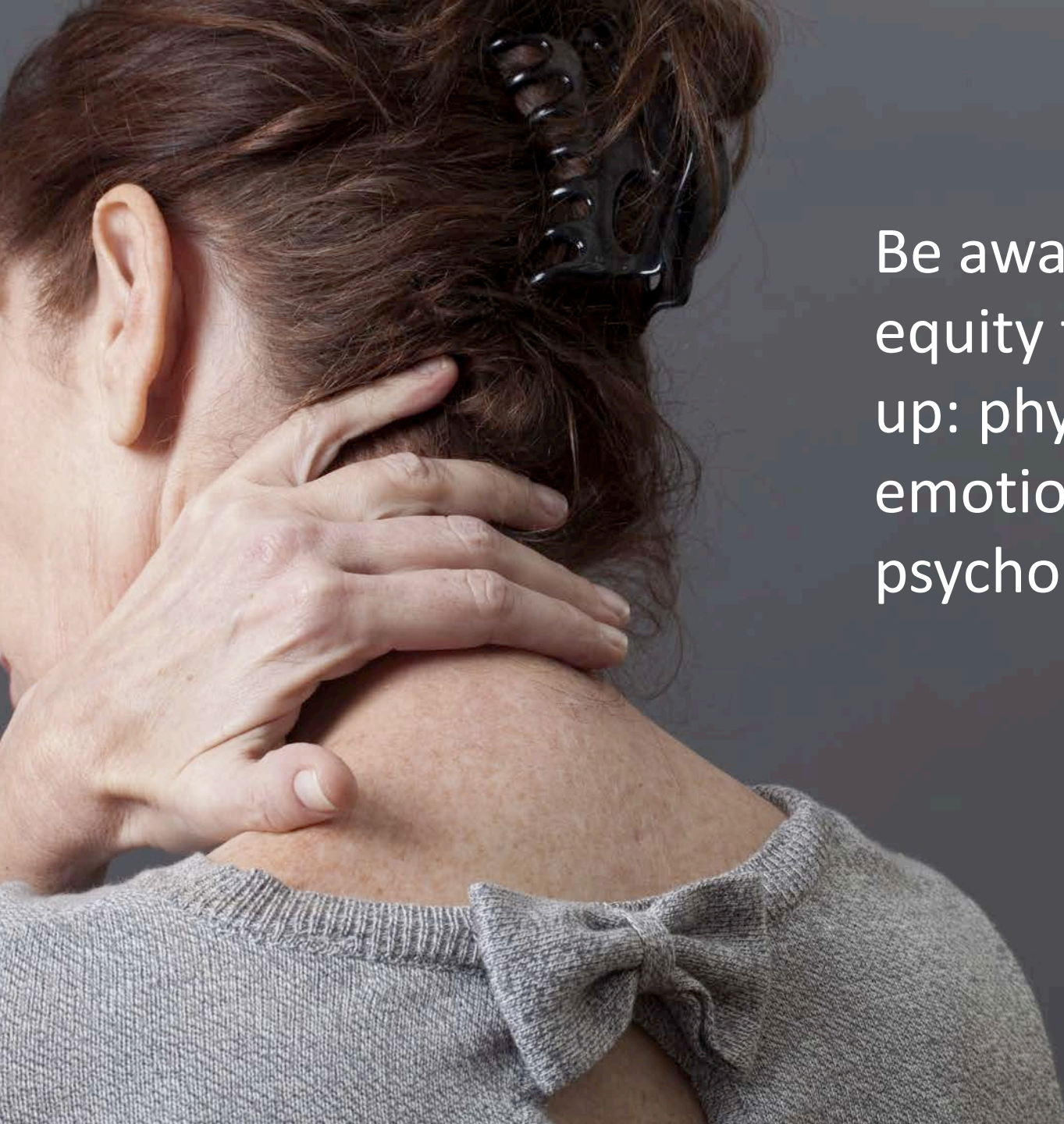
Courage

Stamina

ACTION





A close-up, over-the-shoulder shot of a woman with dark hair tied back with a black clip. She is wearing a grey sweater with a bow at the back. Her right hand is pressed against the back of her neck and shoulder, suggesting physical discomfort or stress. The background is a solid, dark grey.

Be aware of how  
equity fatigue shows  
up: physically,  
emotionally,  
psychologically.