

Introduction

Racial inequity in education outcomes is well-established. Differences in white and minority student education outcomes and the presence of teachers’ prejudices reveal continued bias and systemic racism in U.S. education opportunities and practices.¹ As such, districts may attempt to address racial bias and resulting student outcome inequity through teacher professional development (PD), such as diversity awareness training, cultural competency workshops, social justice PD, and/or anti-racism programming.

A critique of cultural competency training notes that cultural awareness has many “overlapping derivatives,” such as anti-racism, diversity, and micro-aggression training.² This overlapping yet nuanced nature of race-related training reveals how training types exist on a spectrum from informational and individualistic to practical and systemic.³ Additionally, certain training types can exist individually but become more relevant, realistic, effective, and equitable when implemented within other training (e.g., discussing diversity within an anti-racism training).⁴ Despite race-related training types comprising similar and overlapping topics and conversations, each topic has its own specific definition, as shown in the following figure.






Definitions of Diversity-Related Topics

TOPIC	DEFINITION
Anti-Racism	An active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional and systemic racism.
Anti-Oppression	Strategies, theories, and actions that challenge social and historical inequalities/injustices that have become part of our systems and institutions and allow certain groups to dominate over others.
Equity	A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences. Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, an individual's outcomes. The term racial equity is often thought of as part of racial justice, and therefore includes work to address root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.
Social Justice	Social justice includes a vision of society where the distribution of resources is equitable, and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. Social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency and a sense of social responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole.
Diversity	A term used to encompass the acceptance and respect of various dimensions, including race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, age, physical abilities, political beliefs, or other ideologies.
Inclusion	Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making.
Implicit Bias	Also known as unconscious or hidden bias, implicit biases are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness. Many studies indicate that implicit biases affect individuals’ attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not be aware that those biases exist within themselves. Notably, implicit biases have been shown to overcome individuals’ stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behavior that diverges from the explicit attitudes that many people profess. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is often used to measure implicit biases regarding race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and other topics.
Multicultural Competency	A process of learning about and becoming allies with people from other cultures, thereby broadening understanding and ability to participate in a multicultural process. Cultural competence requires respect for the ways that others live in and organize the world as well as an openness to learn from them.

Source: Canadian Race Relations Foundation, Racial Equity Tools, W.K. Kellogg Foundation⁵

To support districts in understanding the differences between race-related training types and determining the most relevant and effective training for reducing racial inequity in education and education outcomes, Hanover Research (Hanover) presents this brief. The following sections examine five training types and their effectiveness. For a more detailed document, please see the Hanover report “From Culturally Aware to Anti-Racist—Types and Impacts of Race-Related Trainings,” available in the [Hanover Digital Portal](#). The figure on the next page presents five key findings from this brief and the corresponding report.

Key Findings on the Types and Impacts of Race-Related Training

-  The overlapping yet nuanced nature of race-related training reveals how **training types** exist on a spectrum from informational and individualistic to practical and systemic.
-  While research does identify positive outcomes for various race-related training, critical perspectives suggest that **certain types of training** are insufficient or even detrimental to certain goals.
-  **Anti-racism training** includes four common training methods: intergroup contact, training and education, communication and media campaigns, and organizational development.
-  Diversity and implicit bias training appear to be more effective when participants have more autonomy over engagement and see **connections** to their work.
-  Evidence regarding the effectiveness of cultural competency training is less prevalent in the current education literature although available information suggests its importance in increasingly diverse classrooms.

Following research on and analysis of training types and impacts, Hanover recommends that district leaders identify race-related training goals using data to determine the district’s strengths and development areas. District leaders should then create a comprehensive action plan for addressing weaknesses and an evaluation plan to monitor progress towards goals.

Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Training

Anti-racism training draws from four training approaches: intergroup contact, training and education, communication and media campaigns, and organizational development. The following figure contains an overview of each training approach.

Four Anti-Racism Training Approaches

TRAINING APPROACH	DESCRIPTION
Intergroup Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intergroup contact builds from the idea that contact between people decreases prejudice.⁶ ▪ A 2018 meta-analysis published in <i>Behavioral Public Policy</i> uses 24 relevant studies and finds that intergroup contact leads to more positive beliefs and less prejudice. This meta-analysis lacks evidence that supports intergroup contact reducing <i>racial</i> prejudice but indicates that intergroup contact is effective in many settings.⁷ ▪ Contact quality appears to have a stronger impact on positive outcomes than contact quantity.⁸ ▪ Balanced proportions of majority and minority group members support anti-racist attitudes and reduce prejudice.⁹ ▪ Intergroup contact theory notes five essential conditions that may occur in-person or indirectly (e.g., virtually): “(1) equal status between interacting groups; (2) common goals between groups; (3) intergroup cooperation; (4) support from authorities, law, or custom; and (5) situations that allow for developing personal acquaintances and friendships through meaningful, repeated contact.”¹⁰
Training and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programs “increase positive intergroup behaviours [sic] and decrease prejudice or discrimination towards (perceived) out-group members.”¹¹ ▪ Training typically occurs at schools and job sites, often focus on diversity, and may lead to negative outcomes (e.g., increased discriminatory attitudes) for a small subset of participants.¹² ▪ Elements that promote successful outcomes include:¹³ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussing racism explicitly ○ Holding conversations within a safe space ○ Using multiple instructional methods ○ Integrating components of the training ○ Focusing on a range of backgrounds (i.e., racial, ethnic, cultural, religious) ○ Adjusting training to meet organizational goals ○ Ensuring trainers are respectful, build social norms, enhance awareness, and encourage contact ○ Include participants from different positions within the organizations and with varied backgrounds

TRAINING APPROACH	DESCRIPTION
Communication and Media Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research generally presents mixed impacts of media campaigns on beliefs and attitudes.¹⁴ Effects are clearer in studies with targeted messages on anti-racism rather than general positivity and diversity.¹⁵ An Australian health-focused report from 2006 highlights that when communications emphasize specific problems and negative feelings, change becomes more productive.¹⁶
Organizational Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training supports anti-racism progress through assessments or auditing, which may include the following tasks:¹⁷ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement new organizational policies, plans, or operational processes Model and enforce non-discriminatory standards Work to impact social norms and wider societal change Develop resources (e.g., teacher PD) Draw on organizational leadership Deploy conflict resolution approaches Initiatives demonstrate effectiveness when they follow specific goals and visions, align with an organization's characteristics, ensure accountability, and measure outcomes.¹⁸ Tools to assess the effectiveness of initiatives on racism require greater focus and specificity on systemic racism.¹⁹

Source: Multiple sources cited within the figure.

Anti-racism training supports participants in increasing anti-racist attitudes and actions and acknowledging problematic distribution of power and social dynamics.²⁰ Notably, sessions describe the types of racism and racists—shown below—and information on being an ally (i.e., a person who understands the disadvantages of people who identify as being in a different group, works towards supporting that group, and continues to reduce their biases and increase their understanding).²¹

Types of Racism and Racists

TYPES OF RACISM	Individual Racism	Individual racism refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways. The U.S. cultural narrative about racism typically focuses on individual racism and fails to recognize systemic racism.
	Interpersonal Racism	Interpersonal racism occurs between individuals. These are public expressions of racism, often involving slurs, biases, or hateful words or actions.
	Institutional Racism	Institutional racism occurs in an organization. These are discriminatory treatments, unfair policies, or biased practices based on race that result in inequitable outcomes for whites over people of color and extend considerably beyond prejudice. These institutional policies often never mention any racial group, but the intent is to create advantages.
	Structural Racism	Structural racism is the overarching system of racial bias across institutions and society. These systems give privileges to white people resulting in disadvantages to people of color.
TYPES OF RACISTS	Actively Racist	Actively Racist individuals consciously desire [racial inequity and injustice] and expend energy moving in the same direction as the walkway: they are actively racist.
	Non-Racist	Non-Racist individuals do not consciously desire racial injustice and do not seek to rush toward it. However, because our systems operate in ways that maintain racial inequality, non-racist people are still being carried along the same path as actively racist people, which will continue to lead to inequity and injustice.
	Anti-Racist	Anti-Racist individuals see where the walkway is headed and actively work against the systems that lead to injustice. Being anti-racist is not passive, but instead requires constant effort. Because anti-racism works against the prevailing “current,” progress can seem slow or even nonexistent at times.

Source: National Museum of African American History and Culture, Project READY: Reimagining Equity & Access for Diverse Youth²²

Additionally, school-based anti-racism training explores institutional racism and its impact on relationships and oppressed groups' advantages and disadvantages.²³ Notably, sessions include the impact of institutional leaders and their influence on policies, procedures, and anti-racist initiatives.²⁴ Anti-racism training in schools also includes anti-racism resources, teaching strategies, and components found in anti-racist education materials, such as those shown in the figure on the following page.²⁵

Components of Anti-Racism Education

Examining the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of racial prejudice and discrimination	Exploring the influence of race and culture on one's own personal and professional attitudes and behavior	Identifying appropriate anti-racist resources to incorporate into the curriculum in different subject areas
Developing new approaches to teaching children using varying cognitive approaches to diverse learning styles	Identifying and counteracting bias and stereotyping in learning material	Dealing with racial tensions and conflicts
Identifying appropriate assessments and placement procedures and practices	Assessing the hidden curriculum and making it more inclusive and reflective of all students' experiences	Ensuring that personnel policies and practices are consistent with equity goals and that they provide managers with the knowledge and skills to implement equity programs

Source: National Museum of African American History and Culture²⁶

Equity and Social Justice Training

Equity training aims to bring awareness to the issues within organizations (e.g., schools) and society that prevent certain groups from accessing resources and opportunities. This training builds leadership skills and confronts opportunity gaps, which impact students' access to resources, academic performance, and disciplinary referrals.²⁷ A 2016 article in *Multicultural Perspectives* refers to equity training as "equity literacy," which the author defines as "cultivating in teachers the knowledge and skills necessary to become a threat to the existence of inequity in their spheres of influence."²⁸ These skills appear in the figure below.

Equity Literacy Skills

The ability to <i>recognize</i> even the subtlest forms of inequity, such as subtle ways in which students' home languages might be denigrated in a school environment	The ability to <i>respond</i> in the immediate term to inequity, such as by skillfully challenging colleagues or students who denigrate students' home languages	The ability to <i>redress</i> inequity in the long term, such as by effectively and equitably attending to the deeper cultural dynamics of the institution that make people believe it is acceptable to denigrate students' home languages	The ability to <i>sustain</i> equity efforts—even in the face of resistance
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Source: *Multicultural Perspectives*²⁹

School districts may support diversity and inclusion through social justice and equity means. Notably, a 2015 national teacher conference held by the Progressive Education Network (PEN) combined social justice training with PD elements to "provide attendees with opportunities to investigate their own roles in producing, changing, and interpreting socially-just learning and teaching in their own school contexts."³⁰ The conference also used five specific PD elements that prove effective in these settings: active learning, coherence, collective participation, content focus, and duration.³¹ Although the study does not state how well the teachers retained and implemented knowledge and skills from the conference, the theme of justice combined with workshops allowed for deep reflection and connections as well as content on accessible and topical teaching strategies.³² **To reflect on progress and assess the impact of training, organizations may use rubrics, assessment guides, and other evaluation tools (e.g., [Checklist for Racial Equity, pages 36-37](#)).**³³

Diversity Training

Diversity training offers an important and potentially influential initiative; however, diversity training may also present an incomplete approach to race-related training, as it emphasizes raising awareness and may omit discussions on systemic racism and social dynamics.³⁴ Diversity training sessions and their role in building awareness and understanding provide a stepping stone to deeper, more critical training on anti-racism and long-term development.³⁵ When used as the first step in a larger race training process, diversity training offers a space for reflection on beliefs and an organization's opportunities.³⁶

What do people talk about during diversity training?³⁷

- The people included and excluded in an organization or opportunities
- Why an organization should be inclusive
- Whether the organization commits to evolving its practices

Diversity training demonstrates effectiveness according to research studies in education and non-education sectors. For example, a 2016 meta-analysis published in *Psychological Bulletin* uses 260 workplace- and school-based studies to analyze the impact of diversity training on participants' cognitive learning (i.e., awareness), behavioral learning (i.e., skill-building and implementation), attitudinal learning (i.e., attitude towards diversity and self-efficacy), and reactions (i.e., feelings towards the training and the trainer).³⁸ Researchers present the following outcomes:³⁹

- Reactions to the training itself feature the strongest overall positive effects;
- Diversity training programs seem less effective in changing attitudes;
- Diversity training effects on reactions and attitudinal/affective learning decayed over time;
- Training effects on cognitive learning remained stable or in some cases even increased in the long-term; and
- The effectiveness of diversity training varied as a function of diversity training context, design, and to a lesser degree the characteristics of trainees.

Diversity training for university faculty members also demonstrates certain positive impacts of training on student and educator outcomes. A 2016 study published in the *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* analyzes focus group interviews with 16 faculty members and 37 students from seven schools. The figure below contains the effects of the training.⁴⁰

Impacts of Diversity Training on Faculty and Their Students

FACULTY MEMBERS	STUDENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved recognition of difference and why differences matter ▪ Increased effort to create inclusive classrooms and incorporate diverse perspectives into the curriculum ▪ Increased understanding and appreciation of where they are on the continuum of acceptance and incorporation of diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased awareness of diversity's role in career paths ▪ Improved classroom environment resulting from having teachers who are aware of and who value diversity ▪ Increased comfort talking about diversity and interacting with diverse groups of people

Source: *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*⁴¹

However, **diversity training limitations** in this study include:⁴²

- Limited time to put knowledge from the training into course schedules, which indicates that training may not convey the importance of integrating diversity into curricula; and
- Not addressing potential student or faculty resistance or perceived incompatibility between diversity education and course content.

Additionally, the Harvard Business Review (HBR) article, "[Why Diversity Programs Fail](#)," notes similar challenges when implementing diversity training programs.⁴³ For instance, **required training may trigger bias and negativity rather than reduce it. Therefore, effective training allows for autonomy.** Approaches that include autonomy "engage managers in solving the problem, increase their on-the-job contact with female and minority workers, and promote social accountability—the desire to look fair-minded."⁴⁴ HBR also identifies the following eight initiatives that support diversity following research on employees in 829 large and midsize U.S. companies:⁴⁵

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Voluntary training; ▪ Self-managed teams; ▪ Cross-training; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ College recruiting: women; ▪ College recruiting: minorities; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mentoring; ▪ Diversity task forces; and ▪ Diversity managers. |
|---|---|---|

Implicit Bias Training

Implicit—or unconscious—bias training includes: (1) what implicit biases are; (2) how everyone has implicit biases; (3) the impact of implicit biases on students and society; and (4) strategies to counteract implicit biases and use more equitable practices.⁴⁶ Participants learn how people do not inherently have negative biases but develop them consciously and unconsciously over time. Training also reviews policies and procedures that support biases and considerations for how an organization or society can adapt to the changes associated with reducing bias and changing biased operations.⁴⁷

Implicit bias may lead to adverse outcomes (e.g., suspensions) among minority students;⁴⁸ however, implicit bias training exhibits potential and measurable effectiveness in changing teachers' biased beliefs and interactions.⁴⁹ For instance, a 2017 paper from a University Council for Educational Administration conference analyzes 2,468 discipline-causing incidents, 41 school administrator surveys, and student race data from the 2015-16 academic year. Results illustrate that “in overall and subjective (but not objective) incidents, implicit bias accounted for differences in the relationship between race and discipline severity at similar levels.”⁵⁰ This study and others show how certain students receive more severe punishments regardless of their actions, and this discipline may affect students starting in early education.⁵¹

Limited studies on the impact of implicit bias training in education find that training supports positive teacher attitudes and interactions. For example, a 2014 study analyzes the impact of implicit bias training on university faculty members' attitudes towards women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The study compares 234 faculty members' attitudes before and after implicit bias training.⁵² Researchers find that male faculty members are more likely than female faculty members to support stereotypes about women in STEM, and training leads to an improvement in male, but not female, faculty members' attitudes towards women in STEM.⁵³

Three Reasons Why Implicit Bias Training Reduces Teacher Biases According to “Unconscious Bias in the Classroom”⁵⁴

- Engagement at the teacher level impacts classroom practice in ways that higher-level policies do not
- Teacher-facing programs engage the entire classroom context, creating potential for supportive “recursive” processes (e.g., by improving classroom climate, by creating positive peer interactions) and, therefore, more promising scalability
- Established infrastructure associated with teacher training and PD enables leaders to situate such interventions for pre-service and in-service teachers

Cultural Competency Training

Cultural competency training informs participants about different cultures' values and distinctions to facilitate interactions with individuals who identify with another culture.⁵⁵ This training type remains controversial, however, as illustrated below.

Perspectives on Cultural Competency Training

SUPPORT	OPPOSITION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presents an ongoing practice that requires people to learn cultural developments and gain communication skills⁵⁶ ▪ Demonstrates improved understanding of cultural differences and how to use them to better engage with others⁵⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lacks a critical lens, maintains a set understanding of another culture, and often creates a sense of “otherness” among non-white groups⁵⁸ ▪ Potentially too general and harmful by creating outgroups⁵⁹ ▪ Does not confront power dynamics and aligns with a “new racism” that sustains oppression and excludes others based on culture⁶⁰

Source: Multiple sources cited within the figure.

Although limited, research on teachers' multicultural and cultural competency shows a gap in teacher knowledge and effective training. For example, a 2019 case study of a large and diverse Canadian school district analyzes five district leaders' views towards, knowledge of, and implementation of multicultural competency training and in-service education.⁶¹ Observations, documents, and interviews find that these training sessions do not adequately support teachers with the challenges they face. Additionally, participants express that PD needs to develop “to support teachers from a multicultural perspective that engages with critical and transformative frameworks.”⁶² Results emphasize dissatisfaction with how PD and pre-service training present multiculturalism—particularly as student demographics become increasingly diverse—and that the training needed to teach a diverse classroom requires leaders committed to comprehensive training. To ensure effective opportunities, researchers suggest working with universities and engaging district leaders in reflections about their role in social justice.⁶³

Anecdotally, teachers of all backgrounds may benefit from cultural competency training. According to a National Education Association article on cultural sensitivity, a “culture gap” exists between students and teachers because of the inability to connect and educate due to differences in background and identity.⁶⁴ Although new teachers may have a basic understanding of cultural competency, this may not reach the depth of knowledge needed to support students in increasingly diverse classrooms.⁶⁵

Ways to build confidence in connecting with students of all backgrounds⁶⁶

- In-service training opportunities
- Communication with families

Endnotes

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