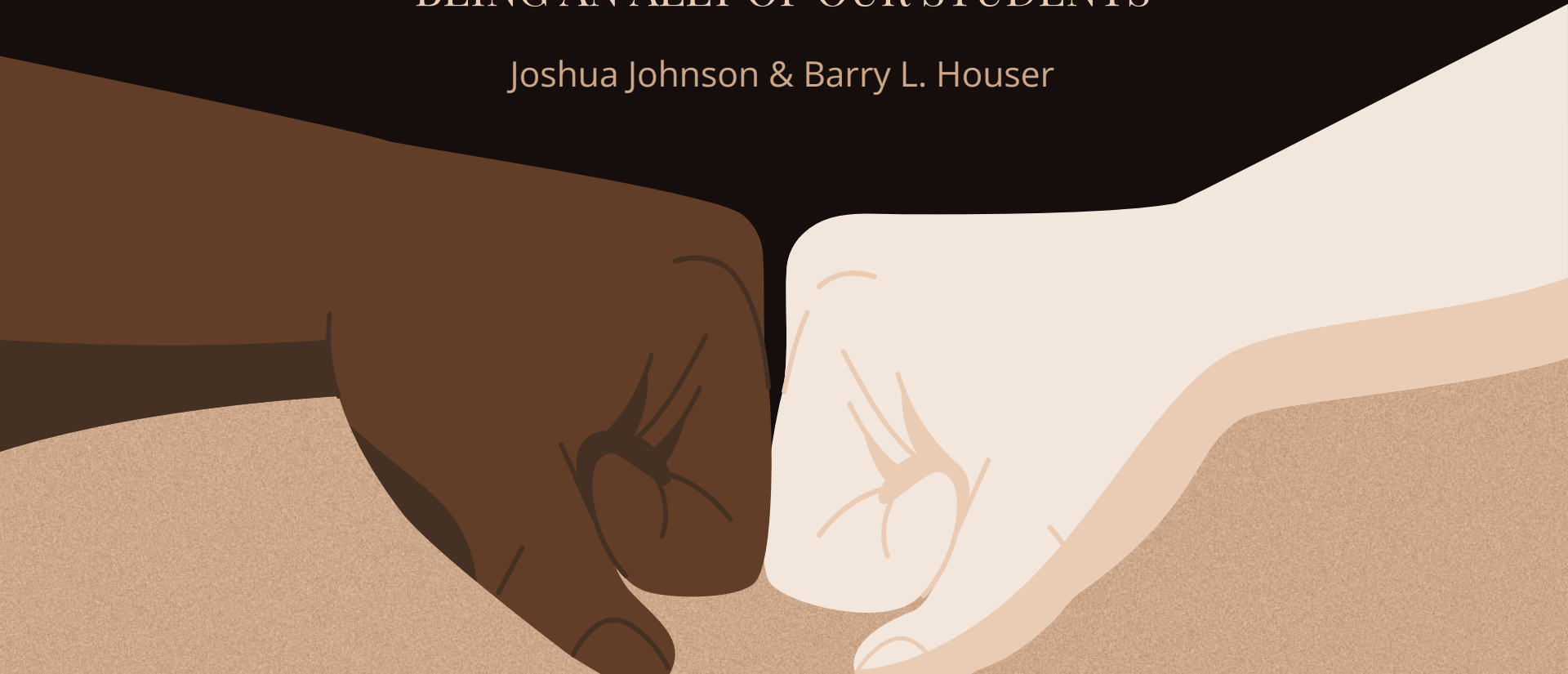


# Get Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable: BEING AN ALLY OF OUR STUDENTS

Joshua Johnson & Barry L. Houser



# Goals of this Session

- Define diversity, equity, & inclusion, & articulate their importance in music education
- Identify & reflect on systems and structures in our profession that negatively affect traditionally underserved and marginalized communities
- Examine, identify, understand and challenge systemic racism and social inequities that happen in our profession
- Establish an open & honest dialogue that gives educators the tools needed to create an inclusive community in the classroom, leading to more authentic and powerful relationships and musical experiences



# What Makes this Topic Taboo?

- The feeling of discomfort that exists in these conversations
- People fear being PC-shamed or displaying ignorance



# What is an Ally?

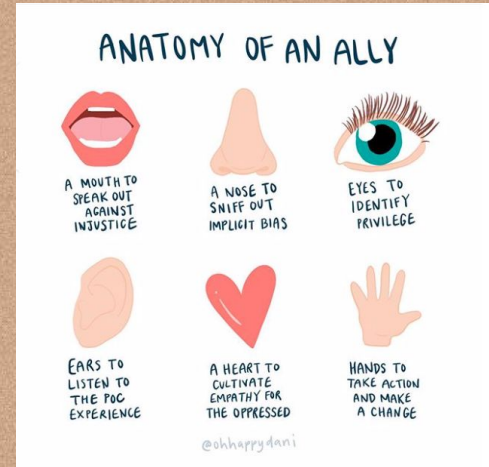
Ally: one that is associated with another as a helper : a person or group that provides assistance and support in an ongoing effort, activity, or struggle —often now used specifically of a person who is not a member of a marginalized or mistreated group but who expresses or gives support to that group





# My Ideas on Allyship

- Not a matter of what I do or don't believe in
- If I have not had that personal experience, how can I possibly tell them that their thoughts or feelings are invalid or false?
- Shut up & listen. Not always a place to interject your opinion or thoughts. Be supportive and embrace them for who they are.
- They may not be accepted at home or anywhere else, the way you interact with your students MATTERS.



# I.

**Building a Common Vocabulary through  
a Global Context:**





# Equity VS. Equality

## Equity

**Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.**

## Equality

**Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.**







# Equality

- **EQUALITY CANNOT EXIST WITHOUT EQUITY**
- While the terms equity and equality may sound similar, the implementation of one versus the other can lead to dramatically different outcomes for marginalized people.



# Equity

- Equity realizes that not everyone begins at the starting blocks given the historical legacies of discrimination, which impact their current reality.
- It is imperative to remember that social systems aren't naturally inequitable — they've been intentionally designed to reward specific demographics for so long that the system's outcomes may appear unintentional but are actually rooted discriminatory practices and beliefs. Systems of Supremacy, Power, & Privilege.
- We measure equity by accountability systems ➤ Policies and Practices



# Equity

Equity is more than a list of practical strategies. It is a lens and an ideological commitment.

There are no practical strategies that will help us develop equitable institutions if we are unwilling to deepen our understanding of equity and inequity, and reject ideologies that are not compatible with equity.



# Equity Principles

The **Prioritization** Principle: In order to achieve equity we must prioritize the interests of the students and families whose interests historically have not been prioritized. Every policy, practice, and program decision should be considered through the question,

“What impact is this going to have on the most marginalized students and families? How are we prioritizing their interests?”



# Equity Principles

The “**Fix Injustice, Not Kids**” Principle: Educational outcome disparities are not the result of deficiencies in marginalized communities’ cultures, mindsets, or grittiness, but rather of inequities.

Equity initiatives focus, not on “fixing” students and families who are marginalized, but on transforming the conditions that marginalize students and families.



# Equity Principles

The **Evidence-Informed Equity** Principle: Equity approaches should be based on evidence for what works rather than trendiness.

“Evidence” can mean quantitative research, but it can also mean the stories and experiences of people who are marginalized in your institution.



# Diversity Vs. Inclusion



“Diversity is being invited to the party.  
**Inclusion is being asked to dance.**”

Vernā Myers





# Diversity

- Quantitative Representation– Diversity is essentially about both the invisible and visible representation of differences. You can count people who belong to different cultural communities.
- How many women do we have on our staff? How many students of color do we have in our program? How many LGBTQ+ students do we have?



# Diversity

- When we get stuck in the quantitative realm of diversity, we use the numbers to justify our thoughts even though the real life application and experience is homogeneous and exclusive, usually leading to Tokenism of marginalized groups.
- Diversity usually leads to putting more funds and resources to work toward building a more inclusive environment » Committees, Policies, Training



# Inclusion

- Qualitative Representation – Inclusion is the focus on the extent of which marginalized people can bring their authentic, cultural self into their interactions and have the same value and voice as people from the dominant culture.

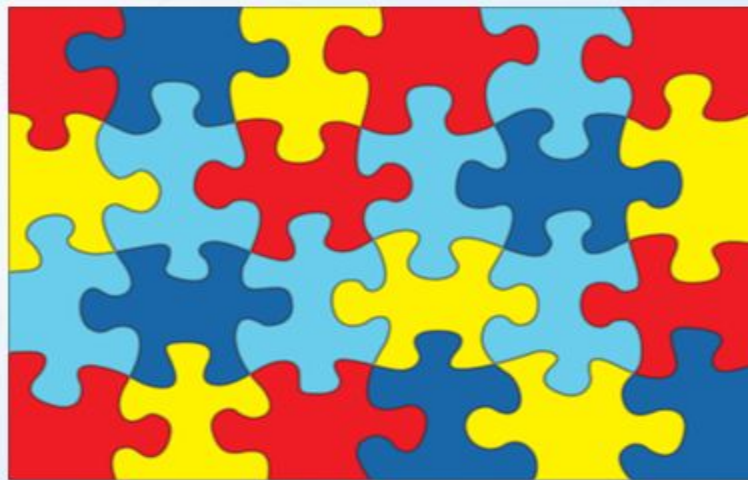
Do people from historically marginalized communities feel that they have the ability to co-exist in a space that embraces them without any form of assimilation ➤ Language, Dress, Culture, how they emote etc.

- Diversity is a numbers game, inclusion is all about IMPACT.

# DIVERSITY



# INCLUSION





How do we Authentically cultivate a program and profession that truly values Diversity?

- Companies/ schools/ institutions/ programs can mandate diversity, but inclusion is the culture that is cultivated.
- Not just allowing people to be who they are, but affording them equal and more opportunity to catch up to those with a historical “head start”.
- We all have important identities that come at the intersection of our race, sexual orientation, gender etc. – this makes everyone different and of value. We are all a product of our personal experiences, and this includes: culture, people we interact/ have interacted with, where we grew up, who we are, etc. and the intersection of these visible and invisible identities. Celebrate all of them!

An illustration featuring two hands holding a white rectangular sign against a textured brown background. The hand on the left is dark brown, and the hand on the right is light tan. The sign contains the word 'Racism' in a large, bold, black serif font, followed by a definition in a smaller, black serif font.

# Racism

Consciously or subconsciously expressing ideals that suggest that certain racial groups are better or worse/ inferior or superior than others.

An illustration featuring three hands holding a dark brown rectangular sign against a textured brown background. The hands are of different skin tones: one is light tan, one is medium brown, and one is dark brown. The sign contains the words 'Anti-Racism' in a large, bold, light tan serif font, followed by a definition in a smaller, light tan serif font.

# Anti-Racism

Confession or the recognition of the ideals or policies that are racist or suggest that certain racial or ethnic groups are better or worse than others. Admission of when we expressed a racist idea and to be aware of our subconscious thoughts.



# Racism vs. Anti-Racism

- We are either being racist or anti-racist, expressing ideals that suggest that certain racial groups are better or worse/ inferior or superior than others.
- People tend to identify racism as a fixed category or an identity central to who a person is, but also think of it as an act or as a descriptive term. Racist is a descriptive term that describes an action, or person in that moment.
- To be Anti-Racist is to admit when we expressed a racist idea and to be aware of our subconscious thoughts.
  - Taking responsibility for our unintentional participation in these practices.
- Racism is denial. To be racist is to deny the racial inequities or the subliminal messages that perpetuate White Supremacy that pervade American Society.



# Bias

- Our goal is to be able to identify our biases and break our subconscious perceptions of others.
- Opinion- The reality is that we all make judgements based on a person's characteristics: race, clothing, how they walk/ talk, etc... Our goal is to be able to identify our biases and break our subconscious perceptions of others. Society tells us certain stereotypes, and it is our own PERSONAL responsibility to check ourselves.

## Explicit Bias

Expressed directly  
Aware of bias  
Operates consciously

Example:  
"Women who are mothers are not serious about their research."

## Implicit Bias

Expressed indirectly  
Unaware of bias  
Operates subconsciously

Example: Not promoting women with families or not inviting them on research collaborations.





## II.

**What is the Music Education Paradigm?**

What is the Music Education Paradigm?

What do we teach?

How do we teach?

Why do we teach?

What is expected of teachers & how do we teach them?

Whom do we teach?



# What is the Music Education Paradigm?

A paradigm is a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them.

In other words, a paradigm leads a group of people to agree “this is how it is and this how it should be.”

What then is the music education paradigm? Is there a common set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that the “music education profession” holds? For example, what is it that we count as music education?

# Who Are Our Students?



S/E Background



Race & Culture



Religion



LGBTQIA+



Socio-Political



Gender  
Identity/  
Expression





## What Does the Band World Show Us?

- A disproportionate amount of heterosexual White men compared to almost any other demographic
- We must understand that in a lot of cases, a lot of populations that schools and programs serve today are not always the populations they were designed to serve upon creation.
- Schools, our profession/ programs require a major shift to a more globalized and inclusive thought process that reflects our time and the progression of our society and communities. Tradition and Innovation do not have to be mutually exclusive



# Issues in Our Profession



Lack of  
Representation



Stereotypes &  
Falsehoods



Recruiting



Literature





# Representation

Representation matters. What our young people see around them positively or negatively shapes their expectations for themselves and for each other.

So, what can we do to help children recognize that their reality and identity do matter?



# Representation

- Marching Band Staff & Lesson Teachers?
- Student Leadership?
- Music & Literature?
- Videos & examples we show – ex. Imani Winds
- Clinicians?
- Learning of other cultures?



# Representation

1. Learn about your own culture and be ready to talk about it. Know why you're who you are because of where you came from.
2. Know about the community in which you live. What's important about it? What's special? How does it connect to and reflect the cultures that lived there in the past and today?
3. Think through the instructional materials that you use. Are there *positive* examples of different races, roles, and levels of affluence? Do you include the full spectrum of gender, or only the binary?



# Representation

4. Take a look around your classroom. Does the decor reflect the languages and cultures of the students who sit in the seats?
5. Think hard about your pedagogy. Do your teaching strategies make learning less or more accessible to some than others? Are there specific things that you can do (or avoid doing) as you welcome all children into your room? (*Teaching Tolerance/ Learning For Justice* has some great resources for this.)



# Stereotypes & Common Falsehoods

- Gender & Instrument Choice
- Race & Interest in Ensembles
- Hidden Curriculum – Who is the “Band Kid”?
- Musical Literacy – Standard Musical Notation vs. Aurality



# Recruiting

- Foster diverse thinking and learning methods and ensure all voices are heard
- Welcome students who may be facing barriers to instrumental music education
  - Physical ability, sexual orientation, gender, learning needs and financial need.



# Recruiting

Are we recruiting to a certain demographic more than another?

- As music programs become “optional”, especially at the secondary level, they tend to serve a population that is whiter than the overall school population
  - What are your ensemble practices and social norms? How can they better serve ALL of our students?



# Literature

- Stems from Eurocentricity – embrace of western classical music, western standard notation, & White, western composers & performers as the golden standard of music education.
- If performing music representative of other cultures, how do we approach it? Authentic? What else are students learning?
- Some pieces/ songs are just flat out RACIST.
  - NBA IDEA Committee & NBA Literature List



# Controversial Origins



**7**

**"NIGGAH" SMEARS!**

Henry Fillmore's version of a "cullu'd fambly" of enthusiastic "slip horn" players. And some enthusiastic family!

**SEVEN ORIGINAL TROMBONE RAGS!**

**Mose Trombone** A 'red-hot' one-step for dancing and a "peppery jazz" for concerts.

**Slim Trombone**—A bear of a one-stepper, with jazz just oozing out of his pockets.

**Sally Trombone**—The long, shuffling, loose-jointed, cullu'd sistah playing her favorite rag.

**Pahson Trombone**—The solemn-faced cullu'd brothah delivering his Sunday-mornin' sermon.

**Lassus Trombone**—The big, lanky, colored gentleman "sildin' a rag" with the Minstrel Band.

A black and white illustration of a man playing a trombone. He is wearing a suit and a hat, and is depicted in a dynamic, slightly exaggerated pose. The illustration is located on the left side of the advertisement, next to the text.

# Controversial Origins

**2020 List of Pieces to Be  
Reconsidered or Removed**



**Songs with a Questionable Past**





# Cultural Appropriation or..?

Category 1 - Pieces whose connection to the authentic music of another culture is ONLY their titles

Category 2 - Pieces employ western art forms, but incorporate melodies from other cultures

Category 3 - Pieces that make a conscious effort to incorporate melodic and rhythmic elements from music of another culture

Category 4 - Pieces that are original compositions by composers from the culture or arrangements that are a close approximation of the original music of that culture.



# Assimilation

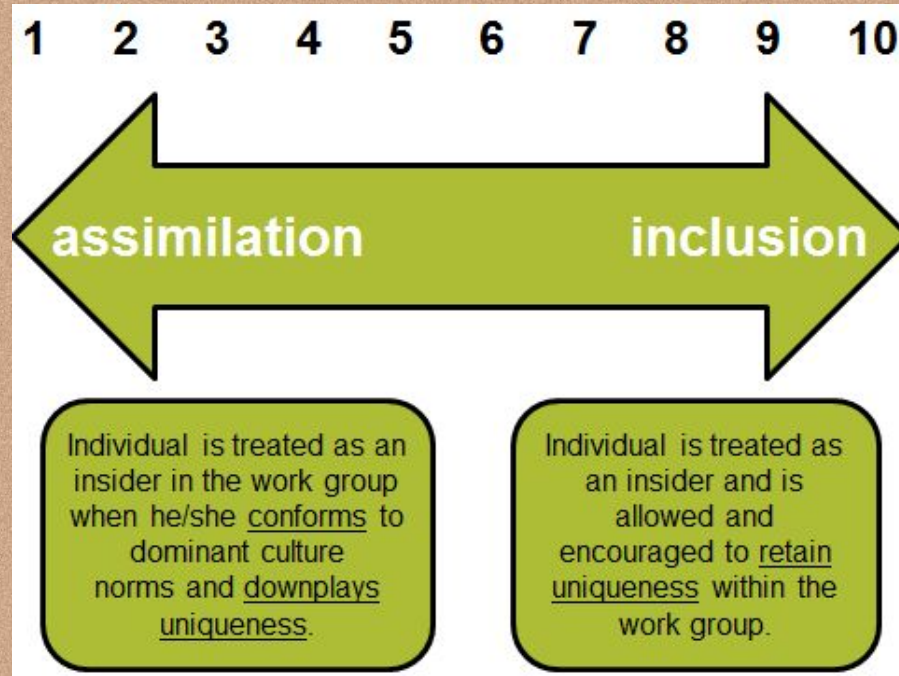
Positioning any racial group as the superior standard that another racial group should be measuring themselves against (the benchmark that they are trying to reach). Typically, especially in the band world, White people and western music forms are considered the superior standard.

Are the cultures of African Americans, Korean Americans, Native Americans, Latinx Americans valued at the **same level** of the cultures of White Americans?

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign - Other music making options, integrating multiple forms of non-western music.



# Assimilation



# III.

## Thinking Inclusively

JUST BECAUSE WE MAY NOT “AGREE”,  
DOESN'T MEAN WE CAN INVALIDATE. IF WE  
HAVEN'T HAD THEIR EXPERIENCE OR  
FEELINGS, HOW CAN WE STILL AIM TO  
ACCEPT AND VALIDATE?





# Thinking Inclusively

We have to envision something that is not what many of us experienced growing up. It looks like a classroom where people, regardless of age, are able to come in and be their full selves, meaning that they don't have to lose or deny any element of their identity or their culture at the door to achieve success.





# Thinking Inclusively

Educators need to understand that it's important to unpack their own biases and interrogate the ways that their values and their biases show up in how they design their content and lessons.

It's important to move past that, and to think more critically about their approach, their practices and the impact that they're having on students. How can we take action through our content area in our classroom, and also in our field outside of our classroom.



# Good Intention, Bad Execution:

Don't have an entire concert of female composers, Queer Composers, or BIPOC composers - integrate their music with the classics, but make sure there is an even ratio. Our goal is to be INCLUSIVE, not suggest that those in underrepresented communities are different or segregated.

**“Othering”** - Othering is a phenomenon in which some individuals or groups are defined and labeled as not fitting in within the norms of a social group. It is an effect that influences how people perceive and treat those who are viewed as being part of the in-group versus those who are seen as being part of the out-group.



# Good Intention, Bad Execution:

**“Tokenism”** – the practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to do a particular thing, especially by recruiting a small number of people from underrepresented groups in order to give the appearance of sexual or racial equality within a workforce.



Here are some other tips:

- Play the melody but take rhythmic liberties
- Create your own melody
- Riff on an existing melody from a completely different tune
- Find your "safe" notes (tonic, pentatonic, melody notes)



Explain improvisation to a family member. Play them a part of the melody and then improvise for them.

Parent/Guardian Initials \_\_\_\_\_

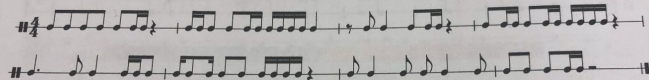
Since Rap usually has a rockin' bass, and I play low brass, I'll take this one. As you know, rap is a musical art form that embraces improvisation as well. In addition to improvising the rhythm and pitch, rap artists improvise the words too. In this next section, you are going to rap with the band! Check it out, here are the steps you need to take:

Step 1: Count and learn the rhythm below.

Step 2: Write some words/lyrics.

Step 3: Perform with the band as your backup group on the next page.

#### 4.11 (w)Rap It Up



**Follow-Up:** Recently you committed to improving yourself, your group and your school community. Since follow-through is an important part of leadership, let's check back in and see how you did.

What did I do better in band for the week?

What did I do better in school for the week?

What did I do better at home for the week?

#### PAD SLAPPING

Pressing the buttons/keys for the right notes. Try and make all of the keys "click" at the same time. You can do with or without air banding while percussionists can snap their fingers.

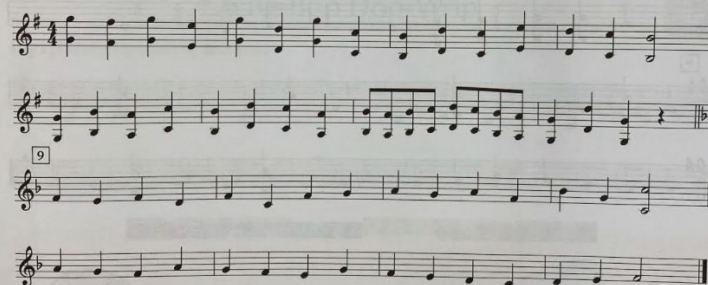
#### Discussion question:

Is leadership different in the lunch room or on the playground than it is in a classroom?

If so, how and why?

#### 1.4 Slap Dat Pad

Pad slap, then play.



Pad slapping is a much quieter and more precise way to practice music. As we mentioned in "air banding," there are leaders who are all talk, and talk just to hear themselves talk. Can you name a "pad-slap" leader in history who is much more quiet and precise about what they do and say? Who would it be? Are you a "pad-slap" type of leader?

Enrichment assignment: Ask someone at home who is an example of an "air bander."

Parent/Guardian Initials \_\_\_\_\_



# Good Intention, Bad Execution:

## “White Savior Syndrome”

Many teachers step into the classroom with little understanding of who their students are and what they need. They might recognize the diverse and unique backgrounds of their students, but still fall short when it comes to meaningful discussions about culture, race, or systemic racism. In an effort to treat all students equally, they might cling to colorblindness, emphasizing their fair treatment of all students. On the surface, coming from a place of colorblindness might seem like a good way to avoid discrimination or bias. In reality, though, this perspective ignores the very real effects of systemic racism and allows white people to avoid examining their own biases.



# Good Intention, Bad Execution:

## “White Savior Syndrome”

Again, that’s not to say that white teachers can’t make a meaningful difference in their students’ lives. But doing so generally **means**:

- acknowledging their whiteness and the privilege it conveys
- recognizing their biases and actively work to address them
- learning about and acknowledging the cultures, experiences, and histories of all students
- addressing racism, white supremacy, and oppression in the classroom



# Good Intention, Bad Execution:

When recruiting for your classes, what materials do you use? Are you actively recruiting all students, or only the traditional “Band Kid”?

Examples:

- Not actively recruiting students of color due to the thought that they won’t be as “interested” in the standard Western Rep, etc.
- Recruiting students for certain instruments based on absurd non-related criteria.



# Building Better Bassoons!

## How to Choose the Right Students

### Intangible Characteristics

- Self Motivation
- Intelligence
- Socio-Economic Status
- Pre-packaged Musical Knowledge
- Stable Home



TeachingBassoon.com

TeachingBassoon.com

2 / 7

—

100%

+

+

+

## Intangible Character

### **Self Motivation**

- Choose students who thrive on their own

### **Intelligence**

- Find smart kids strong in math and reading comprehension

### **Socio-Economic Status**

- Never prohibitive, but should be taken into account when regarding the expense of reeds/lessons

### **Musical Knowledge**

- understanding note reading, bass-clef, and rhythms gives more time to focus on bassoon

### **Stable Home**

- Every bassoon kid is an investment; will they remain within your community. Questions to answer:
  - Do they live in an apartment or house?
  - Are they buying or renting?
  - Do they move often?
  - Are their parents transferred for work often?
  - Are lessons a possibility, both from a financial perspective and a mobility perspective?
  - Is the home open to home practice?

### Notes:

I

# What Can We Do??

- BE AWARE
- Everyone has the ability to discriminate. Only a few have the ability to make procedures, policies and systems.
- Teach & exemplify tolerance/acceptance EVERY DAY - Validate our students' identities
  - School may be the only place where kids feel comfortable, we have all had students where the band room or the building is their refuge
- Commission works by underrepresented composers
- Critically reflect on our practices, policies, and all facets of our programs

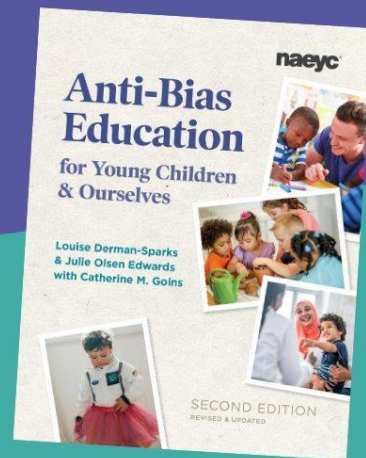


# What Can We Do??

- Engage in appropriate conversation and teachable moments
  - Teaching kids about equity in schools is not about indoctrination, it is about giving them the tools, strategies, language and opportunities to practice how to think critically and analytically. Students are capable of having these conversations, if they don't happen we are doing them a disservice.
  - We must always use our best judgement and remain professional.

The significant adults in children's lives play a major role in helping children feel either proud, shamed, or conflicted about their identities and about their attitudes toward human differences.

*Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves,*  
excerpt page 26





# Sites for Composer Diversity

- ...And We Were Heard
- Kassia Database
- \*\*Consider Commissioning\*\*

**Diverse Composers of Wind Band Music**



**Diverse Composers on State Band Adjudication Lists**



# Cancel Culture – Good or Bad?

- You must do what you feel is the right thing for your students, community and program
- Look at the whole picture, we don't want to dissuade others from making mistakes in their journey to be more inclusive, but we must also realize that there are certainly consequences for actions.
- Do your own research – ultimately you, and only you, have to explain your rationale of programming.



# Being the Domino

- Speaking up and doing the difficult and right thing with hopes that other people will follow suit
- We're not fearless, we sacrifice because we HAVE to
- Being quiet is comfortable, status quo is comfortable. Speak the hard truths when they are necessary.
- The way you respond to inequities can, and will, guide the way that students think about race & the world.

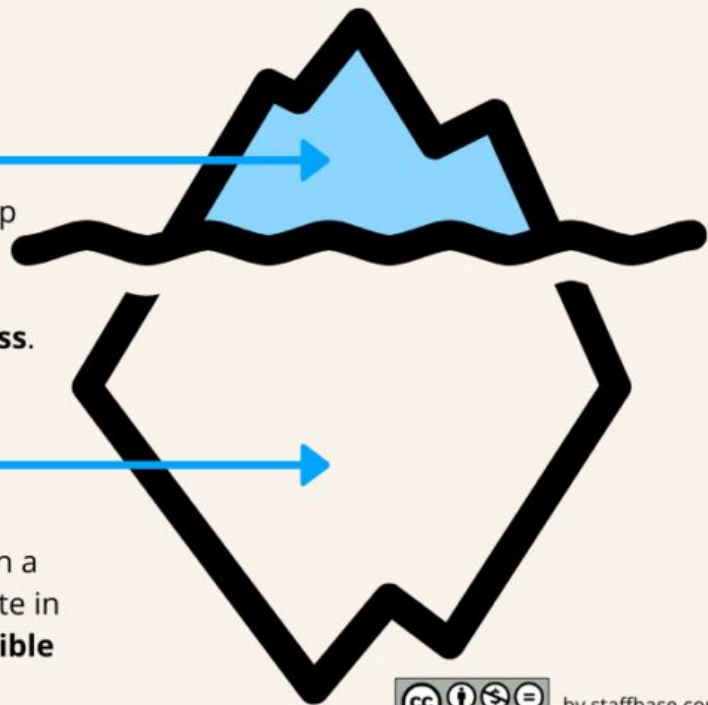
## The Allyship Iceberg

- **Performative Allyship**

When someone from a non-marginalized group professes support and solidarity with a marginalized group in a way that isn't helpful. **This is also known as performative wokeness.**

- **Allyship**

An active, consistent, and lifelong practice of unlearning and re-learning in which a person in a position of privilege and power seeks to operate in solidarity with a marginalized group. **Not a visible practice you'll see on social media.**





# Resources

- **Better Allies- Everyday Actions to Create Inclusive Engaging Workplaces-** Karen Catlin
- **How to be an Anti-Racist-** Ibram X. Kendi
- **Whistling Vivaldi- How Stereotypes Affect Us & What We Can Do-** Claude M. Steele
- **Culturally Responsive Teaching in Music Education: From Understanding to Application:** Vicki Lind & Constance McKoy
- **Erasing Institutional Bias: How to Create Systemic Change for Organizational Inclusion-** Ashley Diaz Mejias & Tiffany Jana
- **The Person You Mean to Be: How Good People Fight Bias-** Dolly Chugh
- **What is the Music Education Paradigm? Questioning the Music Education Paradigm-** Lee Bartel
- **The Horizon Leans Forward...-** Erik Kar Jun Leung
- **Becoming an Anti-Racist Music Educator-** Juliet Hess
- **I Can't Be Racist—I Teach in an Urban School, and I'm a Nice White Lady!-** Lisa Miller & Victor Harris

# Questions?





# Thank You For Coming!

**Josh Johnson - [josh.johnson1207@gmail.com](mailto:josh.johnson1207@gmail.com)**

**Barry L. Houser - [bhouser2@illinois.edu](mailto:bhouser2@illinois.edu)**

