

## What Teachers Should Know About Implicit Bias Right Now

By Angela Duckworth on [June 9, 2020 8:22 AM](#) | **No comments**



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### What should educators know about implicit bias?

Amid protests across the country demanding justice for Black Americans, many are calling for increased attention to **implicit race bias among police officers** as a remedy for police brutality.

What is implicit bias? It's an automatic reaction someone has toward other people. Implicit race bias, specifically, reflects prejudices and stereotypes that stem from a long history of **racism** and **segregation** in the United States but operate without deliberation.

The idea that a person can hold prejudices they don't want or believe was quite radical when it was first introduced, and the fact that people may discriminate unintentionally continues to have implications for understanding disparities in so many aspects of society, including children's **health**, **educational attainment**, and **school discipline**.

As psychological scientists studying implicit bias, we'd like to highlight three underappreciated facts about implicit race bias that you should know.

**Implicit bias is pervasive but not inevitable.** About 65 percent of non-Black visitors to the **Project Implicit** research website show an implicit bias favoring White people over Black people. Teachers have **similar levels** of implicit bias. But although bias is pervasive, it's not

inevitable. Thirty-five percent of non-Black research participants don't show an implicit bias favoring White people over Black people. And among those who do, there is variation in the strength of the bias.

**Implicit bias is subtle but not always unconscious.** People are often unaware of their biases; feedback about implicit race bias is often met with surprise and defensiveness. However, a lack of awareness may mean that we *have not* thought about our biases, not that we *cannot*. We're only unaware until we're aware. **Record your own data** to find where inequalities lie in your classroom —say, are you calling on some students more often than others? This will point you to where you can do better.

**Racial inequality goes far beyond implicit bias.** Implicit bias is one component in the broader system of historical, cultural, and structural racism that perpetuates racial inequalities in U.S. society. Discussions of racial inequalities should neither begin nor end with implicit bias. We can work to dismantle systemic racism within our communities by advocating **equitable education funding** and **confronting anti-Black racism** in our schools. We can hold ourselves and our friends and family accountable for the things we say and do. We can change the narrative so that our children and their children internalize a different story.