



# Advancing Equity: A Closer Look at Language, Labels and Belief Systems

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Prince George's County Public Schools, Maryland

# Your Presenters

## ◆ **Monica Bracho Handyside, Ph.D.**

- Educator
- College instructor
- Translator
- Public school experience at the school and central office level

## ◆ **Sheila Jackson, Ed.D.**

- PGCPs Director, Department of Family and School Partnerships
- Acting Equity Officer for PGCPs
- National PD Consultant
- Researcher on Family Engagement
- Serves schools, central offices and community at large
- Mom of four and spouse of PGCPs graduate
- Pleased as punch to be a new grandmother!

## ◆ **Neftali Ortiz**

- Specialist, PGCPs Department of Family and School Partnerships
- District Specialist for Engaging Immigrant and Refugee Families
- Serves schools, central offices and community at large
- Former School-Based Parent Engagement Assistant

# Our Workshop Norms

- Participate fully and have fun
- Be “present”
- Turn off cell phones (vibrate)
- Listen with respect
- Speak with positive intent
- Respect all ideas, learn from others, and think about application when you return to work in schools/offices
- Use the cooperative learning “attention please/no noise” hand signal

# About Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS)



- One of the nation's 25 largest school districts
- Second largest school district in Maryland
- 206 schools and centers
- 136,500 students
- Nearly 19,000 employees
- Serves a diverse student population from urban, suburban and rural communities
- Nationally recognized for innovative programs and initiatives that provide students with unique learning opportunities, including arts integration, environmental and financial literacy, and language immersion.

*"Our singular purpose is to do whatever we can to ensure that we provide the best educational experience for every student that walks through our doors." – Dr. Monica Goldson, CEO*

# Advancing Equity in PGCPS

Board of Education Policy 0101: “Educational Equity”

<https://www.luminpdf.com/viewer/5e137a6e4c7c100019e62657>

(First adopted in 1976)

*“Closing the Achievement Gap is not just about instruction; it is the way we think about, understand and believe in the potential and capabilities of our students, as well as their families and communities, how we effectively interact with them.”*

# Workshop Overview

For 90 minutes, working in collaborative groups, participants will actively learn through engaging activities designed to:

1. examine the current state of adult use of language and labels and belief systems that may impact student learning, and
2. help participants develop awareness about the language, labels and belief systems and help to take immediate steps to equitably ensure the success of all students.



# Language: What We Need to Know



- Language is the basic tie between human beings and the world that surrounds them.
- People have little control over how they are treated by their environment and the people in it.
- Language is used as a tool for social control.
- Language is an instrument of Oppression.
- Language injustice leads to a kind of systemic inequity that oftentimes is hidden, overlooked.

*Think of language as a source of inequity.*

# The Wallpaper Effect: Peeling Off Systemic Inequities

Use of Language	Effect
Punitive and coercive	<i>"Adversely impacts learning"</i>
Vague and imprecise	<i>"Perpetuates the achievement gap, limits access"</i>
Biased	Psychological burden
Low expectations	<i>"Normalization of failure"</i>
Evasive language	<i>"Laissez-faire approach, blind decision-making "</i>
Unsupportive, unchallenging	Systemic inequity

What is your school/school district doing to provide equity through the intentional use of language?



# Concepts

**Systemic Equity** = in a systematic way, the students and families receive what they need.

**Language of Justice** = a deliberate tool to advocate for students and families to afford opportunities.

**Normalization of Failure** = believing that failure is normal for certain groups because “that’s how they are.”

**Language as a Tool of Oppression** = a specific linguistic code to limit opportunities for stakeholders.

**Equity Blindness** = being aware of problems but choosing not to solve them.

**Wallpaper Effect: “Peeling off Systemic Inequities”** = a method of research to discover inequities and develop plans to address them.

# Open Mic: What resonates with you, and why?



# LABELS: What We Need to Know



- Labels demonstrate teachers' expectations and beliefs about a child.
- Labels can exaggerate a student's actions/behaviors in the eyes of the teacher.
- Labels often put blame on children for age-appropriate behaviors.
- Labels send a clear message to children, their families and others that "the problem is the student."
- Labels obscure the message that learning and relationships are "a two-way street."

# LABELS

**Labels stick.** You attach them to envelopes trusting that the label will remain on the outside until delivery is complete. Many times, the label is difficult to peel off if one desires to reuse the envelope.

**Labels speak.** What is written on the label supplies important information about what is inside the package. Only the essential information is provided.

**Labels cost.** Depending on the size, shape and number purchased, the cost can vary. Seldom if ever is the cost reduced.

# LABELS

When utilized as described, labels serve a positive purpose. When attached to humans, especially children, they still serve a purpose, but the **sticking**, **speaking** and **costing** can have a negative impact. Consider the following list of adjectives used as labels on children.

BAD

ESOL

MINORITY

STUPID

LAZY

UNDOCUMENTED



# How can these labels affect children?

- Labels can have a lasting impact on how the child sees himself/herself.
- Changes the way you treat your kids.
- Labeling limits your kids.

# LABELS

While avoiding negative labels is good,  
It's also important to avoid limiting your child  
with seemingly positive labels.

# LABELS

Labels can be difficult to remove, so make sure the words you use are ones you are pleased to stick and speak to your children.

When children are labeled, it can affect their sense of self and it can really limit them.

Negative labels can make you expect the worst.

# **LABELS: Before you label a child, try reframing your vocabulary!**

<b>USUAL LABELS</b>	<b>REFRAMED VOCABULARY</b>
<b>Hyperactive</b>	<b>Energetic</b>
<b>Talkative</b>	<b>Has lots of ideas</b>
<b>Shy</b>	<b>Observant</b>
<b>Sensitive</b>	<b>Caring/Kind</b>
<b>Stubborn</b>	<b>Stands up for himself/herself</b>
<b>Attention Seeker</b>	<b>Wants connection</b>
<b>Mischievous</b>	<b>Inquisitive</b>
<b>Bossy</b>	<b>Leader</b>
<b>Emotional/Cry Baby</b>	<b>Expressive</b>
<b>Aggressive/Angry</b>	<b>Struggling to express emotions in a healthy way</b>

# BELIEFS



- The **language** and **labels** from adults *give life* to the beliefs encoded with underlying biases and *perpetuate* long-standing gaps.
- Teacher beliefs/judgments are influenced by stereotypes and unconscious biases.
- Teacher behaviors based upon their belief systems have a lasting impact on how students perceive *themselves and their ability to learn*.



# BELIEFS

Interesting Data About Fathers from a study by Dr. Rosemarie Allen at University of Denver

In a recent study, among Latino, White and Black fathers, which group of fathers have the highest percentage of interaction?

## **Who:**

1. Fed or ate meals with their children daily?
2. Bathed, diapered, or dressed children daily?
3. Played with children daily?
4. Read to children daily?

# BELIEFS

<b>% of Fathers who:</b>	<b>Latino</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>
<b>Fed or ate meals with children daily</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>12.6</b>
<b>Bathed, diapered, or dressed children daily</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>12.7</b>
<b>Played with children daily</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>16.5</b>
<b>Read to children daily</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>7.8</b>

# Activity: Exploring Educator Beliefs!

Receive a half sheet of paper with four statements.

Please read and circle your response to each statement:

Agree - Strongly Agree - Disagree - Strongly Disagree

# Activity: Exploring Our Beliefs!

1. All children *can* and *do* learn.

Agree - Strongly Agree - Disagree - Strongly Disagree

2. All parents have hopes and dreams for their children.

Agree - Strongly Agree - Disagree - Strongly Disagree

3. Teacher expectancy/belief is a determinant of student response in the classroom.

Agree - Strongly Agree - Disagree - Strongly Disagree

4. The responsibility for forming positive relationships between home, school and students lies primarily with school staff and especially principals.

Agree - Strongly Agree - Disagree - Strongly Disagree

# Activity: Exploring Our Beliefs!

1. Upon completion of your half sheet, fold it in half two times.
2. Trade your sheet with someone at another table.
3. Trade this new sheet with someone from your original table.
4. Open your sheet and prepare to *MOVE!*



# Activity: Exploring Our Beliefs One-By-One

1. All children *can* and *do* learn.
2. All parents have hopes and dreams for their children
3. Teacher expectancy/belief is a determinant of student response in the classroom.
4. The responsibility for forming positive relationships between home, school and students lies primarily with school staff and especially principals.

# Activity: Exploring Our Beliefs!

Teachers' beliefs appear to reflect longstanding attitudes, "common sense," and their experiences in education rather than research-based knowledge about learning and motivation.

Because teachers' beliefs play a significant role in shaping their instructional behaviors, and thus what students learn, it is important to examine their characteristics, their content, and their expression.

# How do I change my story for advancing equity?

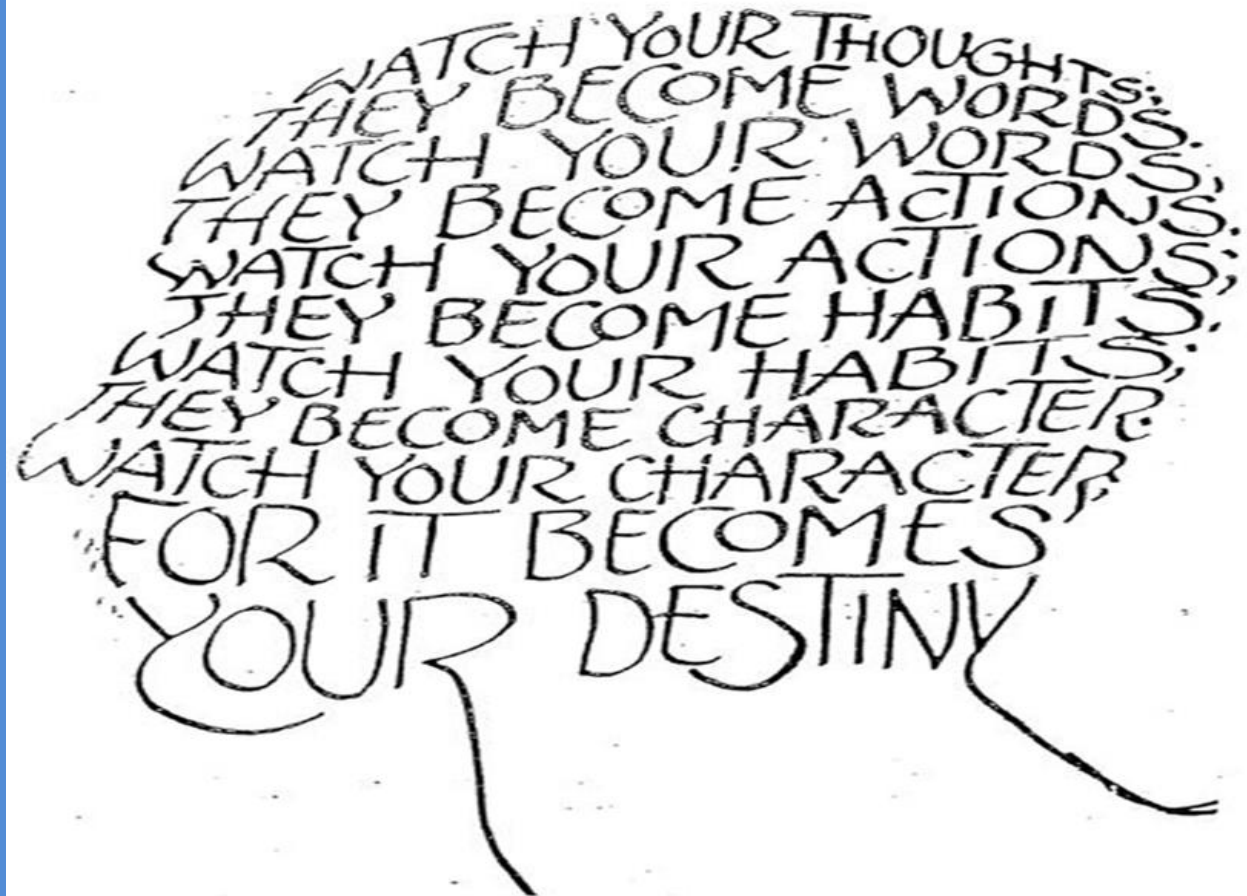
*Complete the following prompts for back-home reflection and planning:*

*As an outcome of this session to advance equity through examining language, labels and beliefs...*

- 1. I will start...*
- 2. I will stop...*
- 3. I will support others to...*

*Open mic opportunity...*

# REMEMBER



WATCH YOUR THOUGHTS;  
THEY BECOME WORDS;  
WATCH YOUR WORDS;  
THEY BECOME ACTIONS;  
WATCH YOUR ACTIONS;  
THEY BECOME HABITS;  
WATCH YOUR HABITS;  
THEY BECOME CHARACTER;  
WATCH YOUR CHARACTER;  
FOR IT BECOMES  
YOUR DESTINY

# Thank you! Please complete the session evaluation!



## Advancing Equity = Standing Up for ALL Children!

Questions? Contact us:

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*"If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand up for much." – Marian Wright Edelman*