

## Foreword

Having partnered over the last quarter of a century with a broad range of school districts and organizations in the United States and abroad, I have learned that schools cannot achieve racial equity without explicitly naming race and exposing racism as central in the failure to effectively serve the student groups that comprise the majority of the school population. I have also learned that educational systems' personnel are deeply challenged to examine their collective and personal beliefs about the intersection of race and that failure. At the same time, black, brown, Southeast Asian, and indigenous children continue to deserve and require qualified and skilled teachers who love instead of fear them, and who understand, value, and affirm their rich African American, Latino/a, indigenous, Asian, and other cultures.

In *Unconscious Bias in Schools: A Developmental Approach to Exploring Race and Racism*, Tracey Benson and Sarah Fiarman, through their own personal and professional experiences, acknowledge and seek to address what these stark racial truths look, sound, and feel like in schools. Through their practice as school principals and coaches for those aspiring to be the same, they've encountered numerous occasions where racial bias was clearly playing a role in the treatment of certain student and adult populations. However, at times, they did not have the necessary resources to help address these issues effectively.

In this book, Tracey and Sarah set out to fill this gap. They reflect upon and share insights and practices. They both acknowledge and know, viscerally and intuitively, the racial context in which they learn, teach, and lead, and seek to guide teachers and principals to acquire and practice the racial consciousness and literacy required to transform the structures, culture,

and climate of schools and classrooms. Educators, at all levels, need to learn how to talk about race. We must develop a proficient level of literacy and competence about the racial context in which we are *all* socialized and its history and evolution to the present, and in our inherited and emerging relationships with one another. It is vital that educators examine, interrupt, and dismantle how racism is institutionalized in schooling and the role that plays in creating, maintaining, and perpetuating racial disparities. The resultant inequity is systemic, predictable and disproportionate by race, and reflective of opportunity, experience, and attainment writ large in education and society.

*Unconscious Bias in Schools: A Developmental Approach to Exploring Race and Racism* provides a historical and contemporary understanding of racial bias in schools as a side effect of centuries of US racism. This volume also offers suggestions on how to prepare, as a school leader, to dive into these issues within the school and specific strategies to employ to root out the mass and vestiges of racial bias in the school as a whole, as well as in the classroom. The hope is that school leaders will incorporate strategies put forward herein to increase principal and teacher efficacy, transform the culture and improve the climate of schools, and increase student achievement.

Leadership development for racial equity is at the core of this book. Benson and Fiarman are avid practitioners of Courageous Conversation, advocates for social justice, and committed anti-racist leaders. *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide to Achieving Equity in Schools*, 2nd ed., is referenced as an important resource in carrying out this work in schools. Many of the school-based examples provide specific strategies and next steps for schools that are engaged in this work.

I hope that *Unconscious Bias in Schools: A Developmental Approach to Exploring Race and Racism* empowers you to engage in, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about race in your schools and other personal, professional, and organizational settings. I am optimistic that together we can and will work to transform the culture and climate of silence about the racial context and experience that is schooling in the United States. The construction of race is acknowledged, documented, studied, and understood. The evidence and impact are irrefutable. Overcoming the inability and/or lack of will to name, talk about, and examine racism in every aspect of our social order and system

of schooling born of, practiced, and sophisticated in race must be a function of transformed belief, conscious intent, and explicit action. May this book be a useful contribution to your practice of each.

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