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DEFICIT DISCOURSE AND ITS EFFECTS ON ENGLISH LEARNERS

A MASTER'S THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY  
AMBER L. LEWIS

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DEFICIT DISCOURSE AND ITS EFFECTS ON ENGLISH LEARNERS

Amber L. Lewis

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APPROVED

Advisor's Name: Cheryl Bostrom, Ed.D.

Program Director's Name: Molly Wickam, Ph.D., MBA

### Abstract

Discourse has a profound effect on all students; it affects their sense of self, their beliefs, and their actions. Specifically, teachers who employ a deficit discourse in regard to English Learners (ELs) view ELs as less capable and more delinquent than their mainstream peers. In this paper, I seek to answer three questions: Why does deficit discourse exist in schools? How does it affect ELs? And, what can be done about it? Research suggests that deficit discourse is largely rooted in power dynamics between teachers and students, and its effects on ELs can be damaging. To change deficit discourse, teachers must first become aware of this mindset and then start engaging in asset-based discourse. Based on the research, I developed a professional development tool for teachers to use to help them identify their (often unconscious) employment of deficit discourse in their practice, and to guide teachers toward a new discourse that is based on the capabilities and strengths of ELs.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### Societal Issues

A growing number of researchers are examining the effect of discourse, or the language used to communicate ideas within a social context, on relationships between teachers and students in the education system. As Fairclough (2015) asserted, “a single discourse implies a whole society” (p. 163). When a discourse becomes a disempowering narrative and communicates failure and inferiority, it is referred to as deficit discourse. Deficit discourse is especially prevalent in education when it comes to English Learners (ELs). Students who are both learning English and living in an English-based school system are faced not only with the challenge of learning a new language, but also with the challenge of confronting daily prejudices and misconceptions that others, notably teachers, have of them.

My first teaching job is an excellent example of how deficit discourse can damage an EL’s education and impair their progress. I was an EL teacher responsible for instructing Somali students who were new to the country. I taught small groups in my office throughout the day. Due to the prevalent attitude of ELs being less deserving of education as mainstream students, I was responsible not only for the newcomers’ success in acquiring English, but also for their mastery of math, reading, social studies, and science content. One of my students, a Somali refugee who was new to the country and spoke no English, learned to read at an exceptional rate. He was still learning to follow verbal commands in his mainstream class, but when it came to phonics, he mastered within a week what other newcomers took several months to learn. When I suggested to other staff members that this student be considered for the gifted and talented program, they scoffed at me and cited the many instances when the student was unable to process simple commands in the classroom. In the school culture, this above-average student was

seen as unintelligent because only one aspect of him, the part that struggled, was being observed and recognized. The student later managed to exit the entire EL program in less than 2 years—3 to 4 years sooner than most in his position. However, because of the mindset of many who were in charge of his education, this gifted child missed out on educational opportunities that could have stretched his abilities and enriched his mind.

This extraordinary student from my first teaching position is just one of many examples of deficit discourse and its effects on ELs' that I have witnessed during my time as an EL teacher. Regardless of the aptitude and fortitude EL students displayed, they were frequently seen as unintelligent, unmotivated, and delinquent. They were oftentimes passed off to EL teachers with the hope that we would take responsibility for these students who were not performing up to standard in some way. Naturally, EL student success suffered because of the dominant harmful discourse that pervaded the school district.

Best practices in teaching dictate that all students are given equal opportunities to succeed and are seen as capable of achieving high standards. Despite this, ELs are often deprived of equal access to education because of a predominant deficit discourse among educators. In many districts, ELs find themselves navigating a school system in which teachers and administrators view them as less intelligent or less capable than their English-speaking peers. The high standards that are expected of mainstream students do not apply to ELs under deficit discourse.

Because of this deficit discourse, ELs are equated with lower grades, lower achievement, and derelict behaviors (Enns-Kananen & Leider, 2018). They are seen by society as less capable and less motivated than mainstream students because they generally have lower graduation rates, lower grades, lower attendance, and less rigorous course loads than mainstream

students. They also sometimes exhibit behavior that is considered disrespectful or lazy; they do not always fall in line with the dominant group's understanding of acceptable behavior.

All of the above factors could be, and often are, easily written off as inherent qualities in the students, their families, and their cultures. However, in my experience, rarely do educators stop to truly consider their own part in the discord between EL and mainstream educational experiences. Seldom do we, as educators, set aside our own preconceived notions to truly get to the root of the dichotomy between the way our students present and the societal standards we uphold. We fail to ask: What is the *real* reason for these differences?

People often view others from a preconstructed paradigm, using generalizations and stereotypes about people groups to inform their opinions. The same can be true regarding the way teachers view their students. If a teacher is entrenched in a system that employs deficit discourse, it is easy for that teacher to fall into the trap of making assumptions about their students based on preconceived notions about outward behaviors that may not reflect accurate levels of achievement and motivation. They may place a focus on what students cannot do as opposed to what they can do, and consider their students lazy, unmotivated, and incapable. When teachers view students in such a negative light based on their EL status, they are engaging in deficit discourse.

It is important to take a deeper look into deficit discourse because of the effects it has on ELs. When educators focus solely on their students' deficits, students who struggle do not receive the same education as their mainstream peers (Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011). Currently, the discourse among teachers often focuses on what ELs lack rather than what they bring to U.S. schools (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). Research suggests that when teachers hold



this deficit view toward students, it affects their academic achievement (Enns-Kananen & Leider, 2018). In order to change the discourse, we must first understand it.

### **Guiding Questions**

In this paper, I set out to understand why deficit discourse exists, how it affects ELs, and what teachers can do to eliminate it. Three questions guided my process. My first question related to finding factors that contribute to deficit discourse. A problem cannot be solved unless one is able to get to its root. I hoped that finding the contributing factors would enable me to identify possible reasons that teachers engage in deficit discourse. A prevailing theme throughout the literature was the power dynamics between those in power and those who are positioned with less power (Avineri & Johnson, 2017; Fairclough, 2015; Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011). After identifying the roots of deficit discourse, I then sought to answer the question of how deficit discourse affects ELs. Using relevant research, I explored possible connections between the deficit discourse and academic performance among EL students. The literature indicated that EL educational opportunities are negatively impacted by deficit discourse (Adair et al., 2017; Dyson & Labbo, 2003). Finally, I perused the literature for ideas on how to change the deficit discourse and mitigate its effects on ELs. The research suggested that one of the most powerful ways to do this is to help teachers reframe as strengths what they would normally consider to be students' deficits (Alford, 2014; Shapiro & Macdonald, 2017). Less prominent, but still relevant, themes that emerged were fluidity in language learning (Bacon, 2017) and deliberately approaching student fallbacks within the context of their lives outside of class (Hughes et al., 2005; Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011).

It is important to address these questions because ELs are suffering in the school system (Enns-Kananen & Leider, 2018). They are slipping through the cracks, not achieving their

potential, and being given the message that they are not meant for academic success. By understanding why the deficit discourse exists, how it affects ELs, and what we can do to overcome it, we might start to see the gap between ELs and mainstream students start to narrow. In order for schools to serve ELs according to best practice, the deficit discourse must be eliminated.

### **Application**

After finding answers to my guiding questions, I developed a professional development tool that was based on the research from my literature review. I felt that a self-evaluation that encouraged teachers to examine their attitudes and discourse toward ELs would be appropriate. The evaluation asks probing questions about the details of teacher-student interactions. Allowing teachers to analyze their interactions with students on a micro level, as the self-evaluation calls for, might illuminate unconscious biases and negative attitudes that teachers have toward their students.

Individuals who are guilty of participating in damaging behaviors toward minority groups are often unaware that they are doing so (Sue et al., 2007). Many people, including teachers, firmly believe that they are unbiased, and would not be open to this belief being challenged. This professional development tool is not aimed at such an audience. Rather, it is geared toward an audience who is ready to commit to delving into the undesirable traits they may possess since self-evaluation requires a willingness to confront one's own faults and a desire to change one's ways. Nonetheless, room is made for those who might either not be ready to fully commit to the process or are only somewhat convinced of the existence of their internal biases.

## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Contributing Factors to the Deficit Discourse**

This thesis is based on literature that was found in the following databases: JStor, ERIC (EBSCOhost), and Google Scholar. To locate studies relevant to the topic, I searched across all three databases for articles relating to various combinations of the terms, “deficit,” “discourse,” and “English Learners.” To narrow the search, I filtered most articles prior to 2005 and excluded most articles that were not focused on Kindergarten through Secondary education. In addition, only peer-reviewed journals were included in the search. Articles originating in countries other than the United States (e.g. Australia) were included. This literature review is divided into three sections. First, I will name the factors that contribute to the deficit discourse. Next, I will examine the effects that the deficit discourse has on ELs. Finally, I will offer ways for educators to combat and overcome the deficit discourse.

### **Deficit-Based Discursive Constructions of Students**

The way teachers oftentimes construct students is not always intentional; sometimes teachers adopt deficit views without realizing it (Cahill & Paugh, 2011). Anderson-Clark et al. (2008) found that teachers often see students as less academically capable based simply on the ethnic origins of their names. The source of the deficit discourse is multi-faceted and originates in various social conditions which determine the dominant discourse in society (Fairclough, 2015). This language acts as a medium of control and power over less dominant groups, and it shapes the discourse oriented around those groups. Fairclough (2015) pointed out that the social conditions present in a given area (cities, communities, etc.) determine the language that is used among its members. In other words, the members, through language, shape the discourse. In many situations, the social conditions are not favorable toward EL students. Therefore, the

language that is used in those communities does not paint EL students in a favorable light. Hence, neither does the dominant discourse.

### ***Deficit-Based Views Impact Discursive Constructions of Students***

Numerous factors contribute to the deficit discourse that plagues ELs. Schools are often not prepared for the influx of ELs that come into their communities. For example, Roy and Roxas (2011) found that schools in Texas and Michigan were unprepared to deal with the influx of Somali Bantu immigrants coming into their community. These school systems' lack of preparation led to a deficit perspective that educators then held about their newly-arrived EL population. Since immigrant students often do not complete basic school functions successfully, these refugee students ended up being unsuccessful in school because they didn't understand the expectations. Educators saw the struggles that these students experienced as isolated issues that should have been solved outside of the school rather than approaching them holistically.

**Social Power Dynamics Control Discourse.** Fairclough (2015) suggested that power is exercised through language. Language is shaped by social conditions; and discourse, in turn, is shaped by language. Therefore, the social conditions present in a given area (a city, a community, a country, etc.) will determine the language that is used among its members. The members, through language, shape the discourse. In many situations, the social conditions are not favorable toward minority students and ELs. Therefore, the language and discourse that is used in those communities does not paint ELs in a favorable light. Language is a medium of social power, contributing to the domination of one group over another. When social conditions favor a particular group, then the dominant language used in society is determined by the group in power.

One social dynamic that comes into play when students develop their identity is that of the teacher-student relationship. Hughes et al. (2005) found that teachers' views of students are also based on teacher-student relationships rather than actual student achievement. Teacher relationships, or lack thereof, with students and families affect a teacher's perception of the student's academic ability. Hughes et al. (2005) found that when teachers viewed their relationships with individual students as negative, they also rated those students as less academically competent. The researchers also found that teachers based their perceptions of their students' academic ability on the quality of the teacher's relationship with the parents rather than on the teacher's perception of the parents' actual involvement in school.

**The Dominant Group Determines What is Acceptable in Society.** The word gap argument claims that children from poverty and minority homes begin their school career with approximately 30 million fewer words than their affluent or majority peers (Hart & Risley, 2003). However, Johnson et al. (2017) purported that this argument is often used to prove the need for potentially invalid interventions targeted toward poor and minority students. They indicated that, rather than helping the population it was intended to serve, the word gap argument has actually contributed to the deficit discourse directed toward minority students. Through a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of three discourse domains related to the language gap, they found that the discourse did not take into account the cultural assets of the children who come to school with fewer words than their mainstream peers. The domains (academic research literature, public news media, and institutional narratives) positioned the language patterns of minority students as inadequate. However, research has suggested that all languages are equally complex, whether they be African American Vernacular English, Spanglish, or Standard English which is typically used in academic settings. Therefore, the language gap argument breaks down; students

do not come to school with fewer words, they come to school with different words. The words they come to school with are simply not valued by the dominant culture of *proper* English.

Academic benchmarks considered acceptable by teachers are at times defined by narrow, ethnocentric criteria. Teachers in Paugh and Dudley-Marling's (2011) study used an established, ethnocentric framework for determining what was appropriate for a particular second grade student. Although this student was able to perform some academic tasks, he was not performing tasks requiring the same amount of literacy skills that his classmates were performing. Consequently, his teacher identified him as below grade level, not placing value on the academic tasks he *was* performing, and therefore dismissed him as incompetent. By failing to appreciate the student's capabilities, the teacher perpetuated the myth that only students who fall within certain achievement parameters laid out by the dominant group are teachable.

The language gap discourse places students in a less favorable position for school than their majority counterparts. In their analysis, Johnson et al. (2017) found that the narrative formed around students who are victims of the so-called word gap is rooted in metaphors representing language as wealth, health, and food. Students who are exposed to dialects and languages that are different from the language valued by the dominant class are considered less "wealthy," less "healthy," and less "nourished." The language gap discourse fails to recognize the complexity of other languages and dialects and puts ELs in a position of being less prepared than their peers who are members of the dominant group. As a result, students and families are blamed for students' perceived academic shortcomings.

### ***Dominant Group Places Onus on Families and Students Instead of Schools***

Johnson et al. (2017) observed a damaging logic pattern that ensues when the word gap discourse is engaged; people believe that when a family is in poverty, language interactions between parents and children are of lower quality than their middle-class counterparts. These so-called inferior language interactions contribute toxic stress, which in turn lead to the justification of scientifically based, yet marginalized interventions for students. When students are seen as victims of the word gap, they become marginalized and their consequent treatment is seen as justified.

When associating language skills with academic progress, this metaphor is even more powerful in terms of rationalizing why certain groups do better than others in school. Educators see parents as both being simultaneously responsible for and unsupportive of their children's language development. Educators in the Adair et al. (2017) study believed families did not support their children enough. These educators indicated that they measured parental support by a student's vocabulary. In this line of thinking, it is therefore the child's and parents' responsibility to close the gap as opposed to the educators' and policy makers' responsibility to build meaningful bridges. Similarly, educators in Johnson et al. (2017) essentially absolved themselves of the responsibility of raising achievement among students of low socioeconomic status, many of whom are ELs.

Educators who participate in deficit discourse place the onus of responsibility on families and cultures rather than schools. Because EL students often come from low socio-economic status households, educators sometimes view them as less intelligent and less prepared for school than their peers. Educators interviewed by Roy and Roxas (2011) perceived ELs' home culture as generally devaluing education. School leaders from the study also placed the responsibility of

student success on students and families rather than schools. School leaders believed that the lack of success was attributable to poor behavior, low intrinsic motivation, apathetic attitudes, and a lack of value placed on education by the home culture. They considered undesirable behavior to be one of the key problems in educating the students; students fought, had poor behavior in lunch lines and did not comply with uniform policies. Teachers in Matthieson's (2017) study also deferred the solution to the problem of student achievement to the homes of the students rather than placing that responsibility on the school. In this study, the general sentiment coming from the teachers was that the Somali culture was responsible for students falling behind. It was assumed that Somali parents lacked interest in their children's education and were not competent enough to make good decisions for their children.

### **Effects of the Deficit Discourse on ELs**

The ubiquitous deficit discourse has observable effects on ELs. For example, ELs have often been marginalized and denied the same access to education that their mainstream peers enjoy. Briscoe's (2014) CDA of school leaders in Texas demonstrated how deficit constructions of Latino identities have implications for their success in school. The dominant deficit discourse puts them at a disadvantage and makes them victims of institutional racism. An example of this institutional racism is found in Matthieson's (2017) study of deficit discourse and educators' understandings of Somali parenting practices within the Danish public school system. The study revealed a difference in the way teachers disciplined Somali ELs and the way they disciplined mainstream students. In some cases, students exhibited almost exactly the same behavior, but the mainstream student was encouraged while the Somali student was disciplined.



### **ELs' Education Opportunities are Impacted by the Deficit Discourse**

Research suggests that students seen in a deficit light are limited to educational experiences that do not challenge them (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989; Dyson & Labbo, 2003). Adair et al. (2017) asked educators to observe first grade classrooms in which students were engaging in highly agentic activities. They were then asked to evaluate the appropriateness of those activities. The data showed that teachers provided different learning opportunities to their students depending on the background of the students and their parents. The majority of educators in the study were less willing to implement practices that involved student agency when it came to providing educational opportunities for Latinx immigrants compared to their peers from different backgrounds. The educators saw these ELs as having a vocabulary deficit, and, as a result, they were exposed to fewer agentic learning experiences. Teachers in Matthieson's (2017) were also reluctant to provide challenging educational experiences to Somali students. Although the teachers gave them extra work, it did not address the students' needs.

### **ELs' Rights are Violated and Learning Struggles Left Unaddressed**

When teachers view students through a deficit paradigm, they sometimes become guilty of denying students' basic rights either blatantly or covertly. Matthieson (2017) followed four Danish-Somali families with students in the Danish public school system and observed that one of the parents did not want their child tested for additional support services. However, the child's teacher disregarded the parent's request because she assumed confusion and incompetence about the parent's ability to make good decisions about testing. The teacher went so far as to say that the child's parent might not be as interested in knowing details about test as a Danish parent would be.

Similarly, teachers in Paugh and Dudley-Marling's (2011) focus group distanced themselves from their students' schooling through "passive constructions" (p. 828). The teachers were found passing responsibility onto other experts in the school such as school psychologists. This provided a way for teachers to remove themselves from the decision-making process for an under-achieving student while protecting their reputations. The study showed that teachers can be prone to viewing struggling ELs as problematic and their many learning challenges as isolated problems to be addressed outside of the classroom. As a result, teachers did not take initiative, and ELs' struggles were not addressed holistically. Likewise, Yoon (2008) found that some teachers did not consider themselves responsible for the education of ELs and therefore allowed ELs to continue struggling in their classrooms. The teachers in this study saw lower achievement and class participation among ELs than did the teachers who took full responsibility for the success of all students.

### **Educational Policies Have a Detrimental Impact on ELs**

Educational policy is affected by deficit discourse which, in turn, affects ELs. Policy makers sometimes construct ELs in a deficit light, saying that families don't understand the importance of education (Hogarth, 2017). Teachers struggle to reconcile their professional judgment with policies such as grading requirements, questioning their decision-making authority, and doubting what their direct observations tell them students need (Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011). English-only policies are often implemented based on the belief that full immersion is the best way for students to learn English. These policies relate to deficit discourse in that they fail to recognize the benefit of bilingualism for students. They harm EL students because they have been found to perpetuate racism and look at bilingual students as having a deficit, and they focus so much on learning English that they fail to develop students' first

language (Viesca, 2013). In addition, teachers who adhere to English only policies often have lower expectations of their bilingual students (Pulinx et al., 2015).

### **Solutions to the Deficit Discourse**

Despite the deficit discourses, there were counter-discourses found in the literature that painted students and families in a more positive light (Alford, 2014; Shapiro & Macdonald 2017). Discourses that focused on student strengths and capabilities were found among educators, EL families, and the English Learners themselves. The literature also offered hope for a change in discourse by showing that society is beginning to recognize that language forms other than standard English might be acceptable in academic settings (Bacon, 2017; Van Der Wildt et al., 2015).

### **Asset Discourse**

Shapiro and Macdonald's (2017) study highlighted the various ways a refugee student and his family utilized agency to overcome challenges and create an asset-based discourse that counteracts the common deficit discourse. Shapiro and Macdonald labeled this frame of mind "asset discourse" (p. 81). Asset discourse places an emphasis on the strategies that students employ when faced with challenges and the resources that they access to get them through those difficult times. In asset discourse, traumatic experiences are reframed as experiences that contribute to a student's success rather than their failure. In Roy and Roxas's (2011) study, Somali Bantu families in Texas countered deficit discourse by describing their own experiences. What educators saw as behavior issues the families described as a conflict of interest when trying to comply with both school policies and religious practices. What educators saw as a lack of motivation they saw as difficulty adjusting to formal schooling and navigating a predominantly

English school system. While educators assumed that the families did not value education, the families stressed the importance of education in their culture.

In addition to ELs and their families, school leaders also participate in asset discourse. Inasmuch as the deficit discourse is the dominant discourse among many school staff, a more subtle counter-discourse also appears in many districts where deficit thinking is prevalent. Oftentimes this counter-discourse is evident in comments made by the same people who employ the dominant discourse (Alford, 2014). Alford conducted a study in which teachers from Queensland, Australia were interviewed to identify the dominant discourse in their schools. Although the teachers showed evidence of deficit thinking, the same teachers also employed a counter-discourse that focused on the strengths of ELs. These teachers were aware of their students' attributes and considered their students' differences to be a resource. The range of discourses found among the teachers highlighted the complex challenge that teachers face in teaching highly intellectual content to EL students. But the counter discourses especially indicated that there is opportunity for EL teachers to inform their colleagues on more productive ways to view their EL students and engage them in high-level thinking (Alford, 2014).

### **Tolerance and Fluidity in Language Production and Learning**

One way to usurp the deficit discourse is to create change in the way society views various English dialects that are different from what is generally considered acceptable in academic settings. Bacon (2017) led a group of teachers through an intervention regarding acceptable language use in schools which encouraged them to emphasize content and voice over adherence to Standard English. They were able to reframe their perception of a poem written by a ninth grade student who did not adhere to Standard English. The teachers who went through the intervention came out with a changed perspective of Standard English and what is considered

acceptable. Teachers who learned to accept various English dialects saw their students' work in a different light. They recognized the value in the work that their students produced. By emphasizing content over language, they realized that students were capable of producing work of much higher quality than they originally believed under the deficit discourse.

The discourse surrounding student language relates to the word gap. When students are seen as victims of the word gap, they become marginalized and are seen as lower achieving than their mainstream peers (Johnson et al., 2017). However, as seen in Bacon's (2017) study, once teachers come to accept nonstandard English, student capability is recognized. If early childhood and kindergarten teachers had the same perception of Standard English and nonstandard English that these 9th grade teachers in Bacon's study learned to adopt, then perhaps ELs would be more fully integrated into the school system and their language considered acceptable from an earlier age.

Bacon (2017) suggested that approaching teaching through a linguistically tolerant lens and using an asset-based approach would create a more affirming environment for students. The study indicated when teachers recognize that language learning exists on a spectrum, they see the value in accepting the use of various English dialects. Van Der Wildt et al. (2015) found that when schools are linguistically diverse, students feel less connected to school. However, when teachers employ practices that are tolerant of multilingualism, the potentially negative effects of linguistic diversity are mitigated. When these practices were employed in Van Der Wildt et al., there was a positive effect on students' sense of belonging.

Inasmuch as it is important to take a flexible approach to student language use and language learning, it is not only the language struggles that need to be addressed. Students' personal and academic struggles must also be addressed holistically. A teacher must have an

understanding of the whole child within the classroom context (home culture, background, curriculum, etc.) and not just a child's language skills in order to effectively approach the struggling learner (Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011). Hughes et al. (2005) suggested that educators should place a stronger emphasis on relationship building in order to help at-risk students.

## CHAPTER III: APPLICATION MATERIALS

### Introduction

Using the research from my literature review, I have designed a tool for professional development that can be used in school districts to help eliminate deficit discourses among staff and administration. This professional development tool is a self-evaluation that can be distributed to teachers and administrators. The self-evaluation includes questions relating to how teachers view EL students within the context of their institutional culture and questions that focus on the relationship between students and teachers. It is crafted to work best in a secondary setting; however, it could be modified to fit elementary levels as well.

In an effort to make the self-evaluation as nonjudgmental and nonconfrontational as possible, its questions allow for a broad array of responses and its tasks can be completed in different ways. Fairclough's (2015) CDA is adapted for simplicity and employed in such a way to allow teachers to record their responses without any underlying evaluation. Few example responses are given so that teachers do not feel like they are being led down a predetermined path. Some tasks offer the option of writing responses or simply taking mental notes.

Before creating this professional development tool, I searched for tools that already exist on this topic. I searched databases using various combinations of the terms "professional development," "implicit bias," "deficit discourse," "survey," and "self-evaluation" in an effort to find pre-existing tools geared toward teachers and administrators that could be used in professional development workshops. No tools of the same nature as the one introduced in this chapter were found. However, there were articles and tools that fall along similar lines. For example, Chen et al. (2009) provided a tool for early childhood educators to examine their culturally responsive teaching. The Implicit Association Test is another tool that could be used

for professional development; it measures the internal biases which people cannot acknowledge or of which they are unaware (Project Implicit, 2011).

### **Purpose**

When interacting with students, teachers must have an understanding of the whole child in order to address their struggles (Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011). The goal in creating this tool is to help teachers see the whole child by making them aware of their students' abilities and their strong desire for success, just like mainstream students. The tool may be used to help teachers gain a better understanding of what ELs hope to achieve and why they face setbacks to success. It is geared toward educators who teach in a classroom setting; however, it could be adapted to fit other educators such as administrators or paraprofessionals. The self-evaluation was constructed to elicit honest responses from teachers and administrators who may not be conscious of their own deficit thinking while protecting the integrity of all involved.

### **Execution**

Each section of the self-evaluation should take approximately 45 minutes to complete and should be administered separately with approximately 6-8 weeks of student contact in between. (In an elementary setting, this time frame could be shortened due to the longer amount of time per instructional day that teachers are exposed to their students.) The self-evaluation requires a considerable amount of mental energy and quiet reflection. Optimally, it should be administered in a professional development setting such as a workshop or a professional learning academy. Alternatively, it could be given in a faculty or department meeting. One drawback of this might be that teachers are often distracted with more pressing matters in such settings and therefore would not be able to give the self-evaluation the attention it requires.



## **Structure of the Self-Evaluation**

The self-evaluation consists of three main sections: Part I, Part II, and Part III. The purpose of the first section is to help teachers begin to discover their internal biases (Adair et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017). The purpose of the second section is to help teachers uncover the ways in which their biases affect their teaching (Adair et al., 2017). The third section aims to shift teachers' discourse towards an asset-based discourse (Alford, 2014; Roy & Roxas, 2011; Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). Woven throughout all components of this self-evaluation is a focus on building teacher-student relationships (Hughes et al., 2005).

### **Part I**

Part I should be administered close to the beginning of the school year in order to capture the initial reactions of teachers toward their students. This section seeks to help teachers realize, in a nonthreatening way, that they make judgments about students based on external factors. There are several questions that are designed to help teachers get to the root of their biases by asking them to identify descriptors of a particular student and the evidence that led them to choose those descriptors. These questions are followed by a brief, boiled-down version of Fairclough's (2015) CDA applied to a hypothetical interaction between teacher and student (i.e. a conversation that ensues when the student is late to class).

The purpose of the CDA is to allow teachers to analyze their interactions with students who typically fit the descriptors that they chose. My reasoning for including the CDA in Part I is that it can be compared and contrasted with a similar interaction in Part II. The CDA in Part I is based on a hypothetical scenario of the teacher's choice for two reasons: (a) if Part I is administered correctly, it is not reliable that by that time in the year, a teacher will have had the type of interaction that the self-evaluation is asking them to describe; and (b) Part II calls for an

analysis of a similar interaction, and allowing teachers to choose a hypothetical interaction in Part I will allow them to think of a common situation that occurs with most students. A major component of the self-evaluation is to elicit deep and authentic responses from teachers. Giving them ownership over the self-evaluation by allowing them as much freedom as possible will facilitate depth and authenticity in the process.

## **Part II**

Part II asks participants to think of an interaction between themselves and a student who is decidedly different from the student in Part I and then compare and contrast the two interactions. The goal is for teachers to examine their behavior and attitudes toward two different types of students. By comparing and contrasting, they will be able to analyze how bias affects the educational opportunities that they provide to students.

The first question in Part II asks teachers to go through the same boiled-down CDA process that they did in Part I. The division of the questions in the CDA of Part II are intentionally unaligned to those in Part I. The reasons for this are to keep the comparing and contrasting task broad and to facilitate fluidity in answers. Another reason for the misalignment of questions is to keep teachers' memories from being jogged back to Part I which might affect their responses to Part II. The tool is designed to make the types of students in Part I and II interchangeable because, although I expect that most teachers will write about a student toward whom they have bias in Part I, I cannot reliably predict that that is the direction they will always take.

## **Part III**

After identifying and analyzing the effects of bias in Part I and II, teachers are asked to apply what they've learned in Part III to shift to an asset-based discourse. Participants will go

back and look at the evidence with negative associations that they recorded in Parts I and II and try to reframe them. They will then examine their attitudes toward student characteristics and reflect on how they might change their perspective. The ultimate goal for Part III is to help teachers see that what they view as deficiencies can actually be assets. In the end, the teachers are asked to record ways in which their new asset discourse will affect their instruction and discourse among colleagues. Some teachers will undoubtedly think that they are not, and never were, biased. Part III is designed to accommodate those teachers as well.

I intentionally omitted suggested answers and examples from some questions in Section III in an effort to facilitate original thought; I want teachers to have ownership over their responses. The concepts in Part III are broken into manageable chunks so that teachers do not feel overwhelmed. The point of the self-evaluation is not to change the entire discourse. Rather, its purpose is to get teachers to start thinking about their biases and make small changes in their discourse. My hope is that by making this tool manageable and teacher-driven, teachers who consider themselves unbiased will also be reached.

## Self-Evaluation of Educator-Student Interactions

### Part I [First steps in Identifying (i.e. discovering) Bias]

1. Take a moment to think about a student you have met within the last few days. Then, answer the questions below.
  - a. The characteristics that stood out *the most* to you when you *first* met the new student were... (check all that apply) (Johnson et al., 2017)

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Clothing             |  |
| Intelligence         |  |
| Personality          |  |
| English Proficiency  |  |
| Attitude             |  |
| Socioeconomic Status |  |
| Other: _____         |  |

- b. What inferences did you make about the student after knowing them for a day or two? Circle all descriptors that apply. (Adair et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017)

|                 |                    |                |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| low             | English proficient | challenging    |
| English learner | well-behaved       | high-achieving |
| smart           | unmotivated        | other: _____   |

- c. For each descriptor you chose in (b), what was the evidence that supports your choice? (Johnson et al., 2017; Adair et al., 2017)

| <b>Descriptor</b>      | <b>Evidence</b>                                 |
|------------------------|---|
| <i>ex. smart</i>       | <i>made an intelligent comment during class</i> |
| <i>ex. unmotivated</i> | <i>student's head was down during work time</i> |
|                        |   |
|                        |   |
|                        |   |
|                        |   |

- d. What inferences did you make about the student's parents/guardians and home life after knowing them for a day or two? Circle all descriptors that apply. (Adair et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017)

|                   |                  |               |
|-------------------|------------------|---------------|
| uneducated        | overwhelmed      | successful    |
| needs interpreter | poor             | stable        |
| unstable          | interested       | educated      |
| privileged        | English-speaking | working-class |

- e. For each descriptor you chose in (d), what was the evidence that supports your choice? (Adair et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017)

| Description                  | Evidence   |
|------------------------------|--|
| <i>ex. working-class</i>     | <i>student mentioned their father is a construction worker</i>   |
| <i>ex. needs interpreter</i> | <i>tried to call home but could not reach an English speaker</i> |
|                              |  |
|                              |  |
|                              |  |
|                              |  |
|                              |  |
|                              |  |

2. Imagine a hypothetical scenario that takes place within the first two months of school in which you and this student interact. The interaction can be positive, negative, or neutral. Use the following questions (a-e) to conjecture your shared understanding of the context and how you each might respond to the other. (Fairclough, 2015)
- Briefly describe the scenario.  
*Ex. The student arrives late to class, and I ask them for a pass.*
  - What do you understand about the context? What does your student understand about the context? [Shared understanding of context]  
*Ex. My understanding is that being on time is necessary for learning. I think the student might not understand the importance of being on time.*
  - What do you say to the student? How do they respond? [Producing text based on presuppositions]  
*Ex. I ask for a pass and they say they don't have one. I tell them they need to be on time, and they nod.*
  - Imagine that the student's response in question (c) was not what you were expecting. How would you react? [Using member resources to navigate unfamiliar situations]  
*Ex. If they talked back to me, I would become frustrated and send them into the hallway to have a one-on-one conversation with them.*
  - What consequence would the student experience? [power dynamics]  
*Ex. They would miss important class time, and I would mark them tardy.*

## Mentally Prepare for Part II

In preparation for Part II of this self evaluation, over the next few months...

- Take mental notes of interactions that are similar to the one described above that you have with a variety of different types of students. Jot them down if you wish.
- Take mental notes of the relationship dynamics between you and a variety of your students. Jot them down if you wish. (Hughes et al., 2005)

### Part II [Analysing how bias affects the educational opportunities we provide to students]

1. Think of a student who is distinctly different from the student you thought of in Part I (i.e. a student who fits different descriptors from the ones you chose in Part I). Think back to a recent interaction you had with the student. The incident should be the same as or similar to the hypothetical incident described in Part I. Analyze your interaction with the student (Fairclough, 2015).
  - a. Describe the incident [situational setting] as well as your understanding of the context and your student's understanding of the context [shared understanding of context]. Note similarities and differences between you and your student in regards to understanding of context.  
*Ex. The student was late to social studies class and did not have a pass. Both the student and I know that being on time is important for learning.*
  - b. What did you say to the student [producing text based on presuppositions], and how did they respond [using member resources to navigate an unfamiliar situation]?  
*Ex. I asked if they had a pass. They said no and apologized.*
  - c. Describe your response to the student and the consequences the student experienced [power dynamics; using member resources to navigate an unfamiliar situation].  
*Ex. I did not say anything. I forgot to mark them tardy while taking attendance. By the time I remembered, attendance had already been finalized in the office, so it was too late to change it.*
  - d. What were the consequences for the student [power dynamics]?  
*Ex. They missed the warm up.*

- e. Write four adjectives to describe inferences you have made about this student and their family/home life. Write the evidence that led you to make these inferences. (Adair et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017)

| Descriptor          | Evidence                                 |
|---------------------|--|
| <i>ex. diligent</i> | <i>always uses work time wisely</i>      |
| <i>ex. educated</i> | <i>makes comments beyond their years</i> |
|                     |  |
|                     |  |
|                     |  |

2. Compare your analysis from this section to the hypothetical scenario you wrote about in Part I. (Adair et al., 2017)

List the differences and similarities you notice between the two scenarios in regard to...

- a. context -
  - b. responses and reactions -
  - c. consequences -
3. Reflect on your responses to question 2.
- a. Did both students (hypothetically and realistically) experience you, as a teacher, in a similar way? What was the same? What was different? (Adair et al., 2017)
  - b. Do the similarities and differences from part (a) scale to greater educational issues and opportunities (grading, academic rigor, discipline practices, etc.) in your teaching? (Adair et al., 2017)
  - c. Are you objective about your students' achievement regardless of the nature of your relationship with them? (Hughes et al., 2005)



### Mentally Prepare for Part III

In preparation for Part III of this self evaluation, over the next few months...

- Take mental notes of your interactions with different types of students. Are you behaving differently toward certain students and/or providing different educational opportunities?
- Take mental notes of the relationship dynamics between you and students whom you may consider challenging or unmotivated. Jot them down if you wish. (Hughes et al., 2005)

### Part III [Shifting toward asset discourse]

In this section, you will synthesize the information you gathered in Parts I and II to either reinforce or shift toward an asset discourse in regard to your students.

1. Look back at the evidence you recorded in Parts I and II. [Be aware of student differences being a resource rather than an obstacle.] (Alford, 2014)

Write down the pieces of evidence that you generally associate with negative feelings such as anxiety, discomfort, stress, and frustration. These items may be associated with either or both of the students from Parts I and II.

| <b>Evidence with negative associations from Parts I and II</b>       |
|--|
| <i>ex. tried to call home but could not reach an English speaker</i> |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

2. Think about your student's (or students') agency in regard to the evidence listed above. What factors are within your student's control? What factors are out of their control? [A major component of asset discourse is recognizing and capitalizing on student agency in difficult situations.] (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017)
3. Think about how the evidence from question 1 can impact the classroom community. Answer questions (a-d).

- a. What perspective could this student bring to the classroom community that would otherwise not be there? (Roy & Roxas, 2011)
  - b. How could you leverage this student's differences to help achievement for other students in the class? (Alford, 2014; Roy & Roxas, 2011)
4. Write down one word or phrase from your lexicon that you use when discussing students who generally exhibit the same evidence that you wrote in question 1. (Alford, 2014)  
  
Think of one word or phrase that could replace what you wrote above. (Alford, 2014)

5. Think about your student from question 1 of Part I. Were there any misconceptions you had about your student right after meeting them? If so, what were they?

### **Moving Forward**

6. How will your discourse among colleagues change after completing this evaluation? How will it stay the same?
7. How will your interactions with students change? How will they stay the same?

## CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### Summary

The ultimate goal of this thesis was to contribute to changing the EL experience in public education. In conducting my research, I wanted to get to the root of the struggles that ELs experience in their educational journey. I came up with three questions that I considered relevant to my goal. These questions formed the basis of the professional development tool that I created in hopes that it would lead to change in the system. I first sought to answer the question of what causes people in the education system to engage in a pervasive discourse that so negatively portrays ELs. The research suggested that the main contributing factor was power dynamics. In society, the dominant group determines what is acceptable (Avineri & Johnson, 2017; Fairclough, 2015; Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011). As far as ELs are concerned, this is significant because the dominant group determines what language in society is acceptable (i.e. they determine what constitutes proper English). This also concerns ELs because the dominant group places responsibility for achievement on EL families (Adair et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017). Families of EL students often come from a different perspective or live in a paradigm that differs from the dominant group.

In order to reach my goal for this paper, I searched for answers regarding how the deficit discourse affects EL students academically and socially. I found that because of the deficit discourse, the educational opportunities of EL students are impacted. They are oftentimes limited to opportunities that do not challenge them (Adair et al., 2017; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989; Dyson & Labbo, 2003) and their struggles are left unaddressed (Matthieson, 2017; Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011). Educational policies such as English-only policies, which are driven

by deficit discourse, are also harmful to ELs (Hogarth, 2017; Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011; Pulinx et al., 2015; Viesca, 2013).

Finally, I searched the literature for ways educators can help eliminate the deficit discourse. Three main themes emerged. Perhaps the most critical idea that was suggested in the literature is that educators must start engaging in asset discourse by recognizing that student struggles are often actually their strengths (Alford, 2014; Shapiro & Macdonald, 2017). Another shift that educators need to make to mitigate deficit discourse is to increase tolerance and fluidity in language learning. To change the discourse, teachers must start recognizing that there are many forms of English that are equally complex and should be considered acceptable in addition to Standard English (Bacon, 2017). Another way to mitigate the deficit discourse is to address student struggles holistically rather than in isolation (Hughes et al., 2005; Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011).

### **Professional Application**

The self-evaluation was created so teachers would have a guide in their journey toward promoting equity in their practice. The purpose of the tool is to open teachers' eyes to how their biases affect their teaching. Changing one's mindset is undoubtedly a slow process that requires deep reflection, humility, and motivation. Deficit discourse cannot be changed overnight. Therefore, this tool is meant to serve as a launchpad to get teachers thinking about the issue. This tool will help educators begin to change the deficit discourse by making them aware of their biases and helping them find a way to start engaging in an asset discourse.

Change in this area is likely to come about only if teachers have ownership and investment in the process. This tool is applicable because it compels teachers to think deeply about their practice. It does not lead teachers down a particular path to a predetermined end;

rather, it leaves room for and celebrates any amount of progress in the realm of discovering and eliminating bias, from a major turnaround down to the simple planting of a seed. By asking questions that probe independent thought, rather than the author's premeditated answers, teachers will be allowed to invest to whatever extent they are comfortable. The hope is that an invested feeling will grow, and a change in discourse will follow in time.

I asked two colleagues, a high school math teacher and a high school social studies teacher, to test the self-evaluation and provide feedback regarding their overall impressions. Both are strong veteran teachers who are reflective about their practice. One colleague said that she thought it was good to be able to reflect on her students and that the self-evaluation was insightful. She also said that overall, the self-evaluation was clear and the examples given were helpful. I also received feedback regarding what I might want to modify or rewrite in the self-evaluation. My colleague noted that it would be helpful to allow teachers to brainstorm answers to questions before being given examples or items to select from a list. She remarked that the open-ended questions were good for eliciting deep self-reflection and that perhaps more of the questions could be reworded to be more open-ended. It was difficult for her to respond to the parts of the self-evaluation that required creating hypothetical scenarios. In the future, when more of my colleagues have tested the self-evaluation, I will consider making modifications based on this feedback. Future iterations of the self-evaluation might include more guidance on selecting students and student-teacher interactions for reflection as well as a section at the beginning that allows teachers to think about their students more holistically before digging into the specifics of their first impressions.

### **Limitations of Research**

A great deal of literature exists on the topic of deficit discourse. Most of my research was limited to articles written within the past fifteen years covering the EL student group. I found a lot of research on the topic of grading and achievement, but I did not find as much literature on the topic of student discipline as I had expected. Common limitations in the research were researcher bias, lack of diversity among participants, and the inability to generalize results or translate them to other student groups.

The self-evaluation has weaknesses as well. Some variables, such as student age and content area, are unaccounted for in this tool. Some teachers might vary their behavior toward students of different ages. For example, if a teacher writes about a ninth grader in Part I and a twelfth grader in Part II, the results might vary simply because of the age discrepancy. Also, it is possible that a teacher might have difficulty identifying a common scenario (or two that are similar enough) that occurs with two opposite students to ensure reliable results.

Excluded from the scope of the self-evaluation, but still entirely relevant, is an exercise that involves helping teachers identify possible biases toward Standard English and against equally complex English dialects such as African American Vernacular English or Spanglish. Bacon's (2017) study provides an excellent activity in which teachers evaluate the writings from both a student and a professional poet and then compare evaluations. Ideally, an activity similar to this one would be included in this professional development tool so that teachers begin to have an understanding of the various forms of English that could be considered acceptable. For the sake of manageability, this was excluded from the self-evaluation.

### **Implications of Future Research**

Whether this tool will actually fulfill the purpose for which it was created remains to be seen. Before drawing any conclusions as to the success of the self-evaluation, it is necessary to pilot this tool with a group of educators and triangulate data based on their feedback and the retention of the concepts at a later date. It would be worthwhile to research and develop a tool that examines whether teachers develop and sustain asset discourse over time. Since the current tool does not offer any follow-up, there is no way to track its longterm success.

To make the self-evaluation more comprehensive, a valuable addition might be an element that speaks to the evolution of language over time. Teachers often become caught in a pattern of only accepting Standard English. Perhaps if they had a deeper understanding of the natural changes all languages go through over time, it would be easier for them to include a variety of English dialects in their perception of academically acceptable English. One can imagine that this would be a huge contributing factor to turning toward asset discourse.

Research regarding teacher interest, reactions, and attitudes toward professional development in general also merits further consideration. The self-evaluation could be made more amiable for teachers if revised through that lens. It might also be generalizable to teachers of other student groups such as students with learning differences and Emotional Behavioral Disorder as well as those who are homeless or highly mobile. Further research about how to reach teachers who struggle with internal biases against these student groups may be warranted.

### **Conclusion**

There is a clear connection between deficit discourse and EL achievement. The way teachers perceive students affects the way they treat them, and the treatment of ELs affects their academic achievement. Academic performance of ELs is suffering. If we can get at the root of

implicit bias and turn the discourse around, we can improve student achievement. Once teachers become aware of their biases and learn how to change their preconceptions, they can start to make changes in their practice.

We need to change the EL educational experience. ELs are capable of achieving at higher levels than what the data indicates, and teachers are responsible for fostering this growth.

Teachers have an enormous impact on all of their students. If they see all of their students as capable and motivated, they can be catalysts of success for their ELs so that they can receive the education they deserve.



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## Appendix A

### Self-evaluation to be Given to Teachers as Professional Development

This appendix contains a printable version of the self-evaluation without notes. This is the version that should be given to teachers as professional development. Without notes explaining the reason for each section, answers on the evaluation will be more natural and honest.

### Self-Evaluation of Educator-Student Interactions

#### Part I

1. Take a moment to think about a student you have met within the last few days. Then, answer the questions below.
  - a. The characteristics that stood out *the most* to you when you *first* met the new student were... (check all that apply) (Johnson et al., 2017)

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Clothing             |  |
| Intelligence         |  |
| Personality          |  |
| English Proficiency  |  |
| Attitude             |  |
| Socioeconomic Status |  |
| Other: _____         |  |

- b. What inferences did you make about the student after knowing them for a day or two? Circle all descriptors that apply. (Adair et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017)

|                 |                    |                |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| low             | English proficient | challenging    |
| English learner | well-behaved       | high-achieving |
| smart           | unmotivated        | other: _____   |

- c. For each descriptor you chose in (b), what was the evidence that supports your choice? (Adair et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017)

| Descriptor             | Evidence  |
|------------------------|---|
| <i>ex. smart</i>       | <i>made an intelligent comment during class</i> |
| <i>ex. unmotivated</i> | <i>student's head was down during work time</i> |
|                        |   |
|                        |   |
|                        |   |
|                        |   |

- d. What inferences did you make about the student's parents/guardians and home life after knowing them for a day or two? Circle all descriptors that apply. (Adair et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017)

|                   |                  |               |
|-------------------|------------------|---------------|
| uneducated        | overwhelmed      | successful    |
| needs interpreter | poor             | stable        |
| unstable          | interested       | educated      |
| privileged        | English-speaking | working-class |

- e. For each descriptor you chose in (d), what was the evidence that supports your choice? (Adair et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017)

| Description                  | Evidence   |
|------------------------------|--|
| <i>ex. working-class</i>     | <i>student mentioned their father is a construction worker</i>   |
| <i>ex. needs interpreter</i> | <i>tried to call home but could not reach an English speaker</i> |
|                              |  |
|                              |  |
|                              |  |
|                              |  |
|                              |  |

2. Imagine a hypothetical scenario that takes place within the first two months of school in which you and this student interact. The interaction can be positive, negative, or neutral. Use the following questions (a-e) to conjecture your shared understanding of the context and how you each might respond to the other. (Fairclough, 2015)
- a. Briefly describe the scenario.  
*Ex. The student arrives late to class, and I ask them for a pass.*
  - b. What do you understand about the context? What does your student understand about the context?  
*Ex. My understanding is that being on time is necessary for learning. I think the student might not understand the importance of being on time.*
  - c. What do you say to the student? How do they respond?  
*Ex. I ask for a pass and they say they don't have one. I tell them they need to be on time, and they nod.*
  - d. Imagine that the student's response in question (c) was not what you were expecting. How would you react?  
*Ex. If they talked back to me, I would become frustrated and send them into the hallway to have a one-on-one conversation with them.*

- e. What consequence would the student experience?  
*Ex. They would miss important class time, and I would mark them tardy.*

## Mentally Prepare for Part II

In preparation for Part II of this self evaluation, over the next few months...

- Take mental notes of interactions that are similar to the one described above that you have with a variety of different types of students. Jot them down if you wish.
- Take mental notes of the relationship dynamics between you and a variety of your students. Jot them down if you wish. (Hughes et al., 2005)

## Part II

1. Think of a student who is distinctly different from the student you thought of in Part I (i.e. a student who fits different descriptors from the ones you chose in Part I). Think back to a recent interaction you had with the student. The incident should be the same as or similar to the hypothetical incident described in Part I. Analyze your interaction with the student (Fairclough, 2015).
  - f. Describe the incident as well as your understanding of the context and your student's understanding of the context. Note similarities and differences between you and your student in regards to understanding of context.  
*Ex. The student was late to social studies class and did not have a pass. Both the student and I know that being on time is important for learning.*
  - g. What did you say to the student, and how did they respond?  
*Ex. I asked if they had a pass. They said no and apologized.*
  - h. Describe your response to the student and the consequences the student experienced.  
*Ex. I did not say anything. I forgot to mark them tardy while taking attendance. By the time I remembered, attendance had already been finalized in the office, so it was too late to change it.*
  - i. What were the consequences for the student?  
*Ex. They missed the warm up.*



- j. Write four adjectives to describe inferences you have made about this student and their family/home life. Write the evidence that led you to make these inferences. (Adair et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017)

| <b>Descriptor</b>   | <b>Evidence</b>                          |
|---------------------|--|
| <i>ex. diligent</i> | <i>always uses work time wisely</i>      |
| <i>ex. educated</i> | <i>makes comments beyond their years</i> |
|                     |  |
|                     |  |
|                     |  |

2. Compare your analysis from this section to the hypothetical scenario you wrote about in Part I. (Adair et al., 2017)

List the differences and similarities you notice between the two scenarios in regard to...

- a. context -
  - b. responses and reactions -
  - c. consequences -
3. Reflect on your responses to question 2.
- a. Did both students (hypothetically and realistically) experience you, as a teacher, in a similar way? What was the same? What was different? (Adair et al., 2017)
  - b. Do the similarities and differences from part (a) scale to greater educational issues and opportunities (grading, academic rigor, discipline practices, etc.) in your teaching? (Adair et al., 2017)
  - c. Are you objective about your students' achievement regardless of the nature of your relationship with them? (Hughes et al., 2005)

### Mentally Prepare for Part III

In preparation for Part III of this self evaluation, over the next few months...

- Take mental notes of your interactions with different types of students. Are you behaving differently toward certain students and/or providing different educational opportunities?
- Take mental notes of the relationship dynamics between you and students whom you may consider challenging or unmotivated. Jot them down if you wish. (Hughes et al., 2005)

### Part III

In this section, you will synthesize the information you gathered in Parts I and II to either reinforce or shift toward an asset discourse in regard to your students.

1. Look back at the evidence you recorded in Parts I and II (Alford, 2014).

Write down the pieces of evidence that you generally associate with negative feelings such as anxiety, discomfort, stress, and frustration. These items may be associated with either or both of the students from Parts I and II.

| <b>Evidence with negative associations from Parts I and II</b>       |
|--|
| <i>ex. tried to call home but could not reach an English speaker</i> |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

2. Think about your student's (or students') agency in regard to the evidence listed above. What factors are within your student's control? What factors are out of their control? (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017)

3. Think about how the evidence from question 1 can impact the classroom community. Answer questions (a-d).
  - a. What perspective could this student bring to the classroom community that would otherwise not be there? (Roy & Roxas, 2011)
  - b. How could you leverage this student's differences to help achievement for other students in the class? (Alford, 2014; Roy & Roxas, 2011)
4. Write down one word or phrase from your lexicon that you use when discussing students who generally exhibit the same evidence that you wrote in question 1. (Alford, 2014)

Think of one word or phrase that could replace what you wrote above. (Alford, 2014)

5. Think about your student from question 1 of Part I. Were there any misconceptions you had about your student right after meeting them? If so, what were they?

### **Moving Forward**

6. How will your discourse among colleagues change after completing this evaluation? How will it stay the same?
7. How will your interactions with students change? How will they stay the same?