Bias Busting for Beginners

An Introduction to Anti-Bias in Education

Acknowledgements

Northern Ireland Office

An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

Our Mission & Vision

NICIE's mission is to promote reconciliation in Northern Ireland through Integrated Education.

Our vision is of a society where all children are:

- **educated together;**
- **confident to express their own identity and culture; and**
- **respectful of, and prepared to engage with, the identity and culture of others.**

Council for Integrated Education

Learning Together for a Shared Society

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Welcome

I am writing this foreword at a time in our global history when we have never been more aware of what connects humanity and so unaware as to what the future holds for it.

At the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, (NICIE), we hope that our emergence from the pandemic will provide new opportunities to set aside division and create a happier and fairer society. One way that we can all 'be the change we want to see' is to tackle all forms of bias, prejudice, discrimination and injustice: **to be non-biased is not enough, we need to practice anti-bias in our lives**. This publication is designed to provide you with a brief introduction to the what, why, how and potential of Anti-Bias in Education in Northern Ireland.

In considering how to 'do' peace and reconciliation in schools every day, NICIE is inspired by the work of many activists and educationalists. One of these is Louise Derman-Sparks, who worked for 50 years in the USA as a pre-school teacher, childcare centre director, college teacher, author, consultant and social justice activist and now lives in California. Her first publication on Anti-Bias in Education in 1989 and its successors in 2010 and 2020 have been a strong influence in this Anti-Bias in Education publication.

The anti-bias approach enables each of us to: recognise our own and others' social identities and groups; notice if there is something unjust in how these groups are perceived and treated and last, but not least; to do something about it if we see an injustice.

NICIE believe that the application of Anti-Bias in Education is an essential ingredient of our recipe to build peace, reconciliation and equality between social groups in NI.

"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced."
James Baldwin – Novelist

Roisin Marshall
NICIE Chief Executive Officer
March 2021

About this Publication

This publication is designed to introduce educators to the concept of Anti-Bias in Education. As the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, part of our remit is to support teachers in Integrated schools, but the ideas contained here are applicable in all educational establishments and beyond.

The purpose of this publication is:

- to **introduce** you to the ideas and thinking that sit behind the Anti-Bias in Education approach and entice you to explore how you might apply those ideas and thoughts in your life and work;

- to **challenge** us all to unearth injustices at both the personal and systemic levels and then, perhaps most importantly, become activists in the face of that injustice;

- to invite you to engage **reflective practice** tools in relation to bias in/on your life and in/on the lives of those around you;

- to enable you to start to think about how you can **embed** anti-bias approaches in your life and in your educational practice. To this end, we have included 'Things to think about and do' boxes in the sections which deal with specific forms of bias.

How to use this publication

The words which are in bold and numbered (**Bold**[1]) indicate that there is an online resource which you can refer to for more information. These are listed in the section at the back called 'Online References'.

As you delve more deeply and over a longer period, you will recognise that the application of these ideas relates to a variety of domains. These include but are not limited to:

- classroom practice;
- personal and professional development;
- school development;
- whole-school culture;
- ethos;
- the school within its local and wider community;
- curriculum.

To continue your journey, you will find suggested resources on the **Anti-Bias in Education** section of NICIE's website.

NICIE facilitates introductory workshops in Anti-Bias in Education and a full accredited course. These are designed as an opportunity for educators to come together in a safe space and reflect on the out-workings of bias in their own lives, social circles, careers, schools, communities, society and classrooms. If you are interested in taking part or organising a workshop for your school, please contact us.

PART ONE

Integrated Education, Bias and Anti-Bias

This part consists of three sections which introduce Integrated Education, Bias and Anti-Bias. Firstly, we outline the origins of Integrated Education and how the thinking behind this people-led social movement relate to the Anti-Bias approach. This next two sections introduce the concepts of bias and anti-bias with a view to inviting you to engage with these ideas in your life and work.

Part two consists of eight sections which are each designed to support your learning about a different type of bias:

SECTARIANISM AND RELIGION

SECTARIANISM AND CULTURE

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

RACISM

SEXISM

CLASSISM

DISABLISM

AGEISM

1. The Integrated Education Movement

The history of Integrated Education

Integrated Education was founded in response to the divided education system of Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 80s, and the broken and conflicted society surrounding it.

In the early 1970s a group called 'All Children Together' formed and in 1974 stated:

> "We believe that the high degree of religious segregation in the Northern Ireland education system is an obstacle to the solution of Northern Ireland's problems." (Bardon, 2009).

One of the founding members, Cecil Linehan stated her opinion in 1977 that, "The issue is not whether any particular schools are divisive in Northern Ireland, it is that our educational system is entirely divided, echoing and reinforcing the divisions which already exist in the province along political, religious, historical, social and cultural lines." (ibid)

They knew that simply mixing children wasn't enough, they had to intentionally engage them in reconciliation processes and that meant talking about sectarianism and The Troubles.

The efforts of the parents who formed 'All Children Together' culminated in the establishment of Lagan College, which opened its doors to 28 Year Eight students in September 1981. **NICIE's 'Big Small Stories' project**[2] has more information about the history of Integrated Education including teaching resources.

When Integrated schools first began to bring Protestant, Catholic and children from other backgrounds together in 1981, the daily news bulletins brought images of violence, deeply rooted community resentment and unrest. Talking about your political and/or religious views was only safe in your own community. Such was the nature of our conflict, many of us felt it was best to keep quiet, out of genuine feelings of fear.

Whilst progress is being made, the north of Ireland/Northern Ireland continues to be a disputed and contested place. We continue to experience deeply ingrained distrust, division, hostilities and conflict between different groups of people that live here. Consequently, many of us find it difficult to talk about 'The Troubles' and be an upstander against sectarianism. Nevertheless, this is what the reconciliation project of Integrated Education requires. It is not an easy task, but it is a task that NICIE wants to encourage educators to take on and is the reason that we promote Anti-Bias in Education. Whilst our remit is influencing practice within Integrated schools, there is obvious potential for this approach to be applied more widely.

What is different about an Integrated school?

As a people-led movement for social change, explicitly committed to peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, Integrated Education is different from other educational provision.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 and was ratified by the United Kingdom in 1991. As one of the most globally applied human rights conventions in history, it has had wide reaching impact. Article 29 states that education should prepare children to live responsibly and peacefully in a free society, *"in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin."*

The Convention, along with many other peace and reconciliation and **social and educational policy**[3] developments, has enabled schools in Northern Ireland to regularly connect with issues of equality and human rights. Educators are better equipped to engage with differences such as world religion, global nationality, gender, gender identity, ethnicity and perhaps sexual orientation. In a society

> "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."
>
> **Albert Einstein – Theoretical Physicist**

emerging from conflict, the bigger challenge lies in engaging with the contested socio-political identities at the root of that conflict: being British, Irish, Northern Irish, Nationalist, Unionist, Protestant, Catholic and so on. This is the essence of what is different about an Integrated school.

The NICIE **Statement of Principles**[4] outlines the affirmations of the Integrated Education movement as follows:

1. Parents, together with their children, have rights in determining the nature of each child's education as set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (Human Rights Act, 1998) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2. Children and young people of all religious, social and cultural backgrounds, regardless of ability, race, gender or sexual orientation have a right to an education which respects and gives expression to their individual identities, while providing opportunities for them to explore the diversity of the world in which they live.

3. In an inherently segregated and contested society, children and young people can learn to respect difference more effectively when they are afforded the opportunity to have meaningful and sustained engagement with those who are different from themselves.

4. Young people should be encouraged to recognise those less fortunate than themselves, the oppressed and victims of injustice.

Integrated Education contributes to reconciliation by purposefully creating an everyday educational environment which is representative of Protestant, Catholic and other religions, communities, traditions and diversities. Establishing diversity in the school is one thing, but what Integrated schools then do is intentionally engage with that precious diversity. People in Integrated schools are uniquely advantaged, because they have the opportunity to learn with 'others', not just about them. This requires all members of the school community to play a part: being proactive and seeking out opportunities to express, learn from and value difference is everyone's responsibility.

This deliberate creation and intentional engagement with diversity is a unique feature of Integrated schools. We are referring here to engagement with diversity in general and specifically with the diversity and divisions that have characterised conflict locally.

"The most dramatic and significant change within society in Northern Ireland recently has been the move away from violence towards a culture that supports democratic politics. Education has a responsibility to support this."
(**CCEA, 2007**[5] *statutory curriculum*)

Using an anti-bias approach is an intentional method, a mindset and a lens. It requires an activist approach and a commitment to social change.

Integrated Education is now growing at a renewed pace, parental demand is increasing and in response, more school leaders and communities are taking steps to meet that demand. The **Integrated Education Fund**[6] and **NI Life and Times**[7] surveys consistently show that more than 60% of parents want more Integrated Education options where they live. In the school year 2019/20, the **Department of Education**[8] recorded that there were 24,261 pupils in Integrated schools in Northern Ireland, representing just 7.5% of the student population. The whole of the education system and our government still have much work to do to meet the parental demand for Integrated Education.

NICIE works alongside our sister organisation, the **Integrated Education Fund**[9], to increase Integrated Education provision in Northern Ireland. If you attended an Integrated school, you might want to consider joining the **Integrated Alumni**[10] organisation.

During a landmark Judicial Review finding in 2014 relating to Drumragh Integrated College, Justice Treacy described Integrated Education as a 'standalone concept'. His judgement stated that;

"A school which has a predominantly Catholic or predominantly Protestant ethos... cannot be said to be delivering Integrated Education (i.e. serving members of different religious groups equally) because, as part of its constitution as an institution it is fundamentally oriented to one religious canon over another.

...an Integrated school strives to achieve an equal balance in relation to worship, celebration and exposure to both faiths. This is reflected in its constitution and the board must strive in its ethos to achieve this."

> "We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are."
>
> **Anaïs Nin – Diarist**

2. Bias

Social Identity: in-groups and out-groups

In order to make sense of the complex social world in which we live, we tend to compartmentalise ourselves and others into social groups in our minds. This naturally then flows out into how we form ourselves into social groups in society. Social psychologists refer to these as 'in-groups' (the groups that we belong to) and 'out-groups' (all the other groups). It is common and arguably 'natural', for humans to ascribe more positive attributes/bias to in-groups and more negative attributes/bias to out-groups because in doing so, we can build our self-esteem, sense of belonging and security. This is the basis of Henri Tajfel's (1979) **'Social Identity Theory'**[11].

Of course, bias is also informed and influenced by our relationships with friends, family, society, community, institutions, politics as well as social, religious and global movements. Our minds are busy places, particularly in modern times and with the growing presence of social media in our lives.

Muldoon et al (2010) conducted research in Northern Ireland which indicated that if we strongly identify as being either Protestant or Catholic, then we are more likely to have increased positive emotions about our own group (such as pride and happiness). The researchers also suggest that group members can feel ambivalent emotions about their identity, for example feeling both proud and ashamed.

Different types of bias

Facing History and Ourselves[12] is an organisation that helps students to connect choices made in the past to those they will confront in their own lives. They outline some definitions of bias as follows:

Bias

is a tendency to believe that some people, ideas, etc., are better than others, which often results in treating some people unfairly.

Explicit bias

refers to attitudes and beliefs (positive or negative) that we consciously or deliberately hold and express about a person or group. Explicit and implicit biases can sometimes contradict each other.

Implicit bias

includes attitudes and beliefs (positive or negative) about other people, ideas, issues, or institutions that occur outside of our conscious awareness and control, which affect our opinions and behaviour. Everyone has implicit biases - even people who try to remain objective (e.g., judges and journalists) - that they have developed over a lifetime. However, people can work to combat and change these biases.

Confirmation bias

or the selective collection of evidence, is our subconscious tendency to seek and interpret information and other evidence in ways that affirm our existing beliefs, ideas, expectations, and/or hypotheses. Therefore, confirmation bias is both affected by and feeds our implicit biases. It can be most entrenched around beliefs and ideas that we are strongly attached to or that provoke a strong emotional response. The term **confirmation bias**[13] was coined by a psychologist called Peter Wason. His research demonstrates that we (most people) do not objectively test our beliefs, rather we seek to confirm them.

How we express our bias

Because we all identify with/belong to social groups, we all have bias. The expression of our bias ranges from what psychologist **Binna Kandola**[14] refers to as 'micro-incivilities' to open hostility and aggression. He defines micro-incivilities as being 'commonplace behaviours or aspects of an environment which signal, wittingly or unwittingly, that someone doesn't belong, or they're not welcome'.

Examples of micro-incivilities[15]**:**
- Being ignored
- Being talked over
- Having authority undermined
- Being constantly criticised for seemingly small issues
- Not making eye contact

Of course, bias can also be expressed in much more obvious ways including exclusion, avoidance, verbal abuse, bullying, aggression, physical abuse and war.

Reactions to bias

Our reactions to bias when we notice it are often 'instinctive' and in-the-moment. They will be different depending on the context and whether you are on the receiving end of it.

Typical reactions include:
- you may be uncertain as to whether you are witnessing bias;
- you may be frightened or feel anxious about what you are seeing;
- you may collude with the bias and/or discrimination (consciously or unconsciously) by joining in or remaining silent;
- you may make a conscious decision to be an upstander and to actively challenge bias.

> "We realise the importance of our voices only when we are silenced."
>
> **Malala Yousafazi - Education Equality Activist**

What works to reduce bias?

Allport's (1954) **contact theory**[16] states that one way to reduce prejudice is by bringing together different social groups that have prejudiced views about the other. This theory further stipulates that there are four 'optimising conditions' which help prejudice reduction when we bring social groups together. They are:

Equal status – Members of the contact situation should not have an unequal or hierarchical relationship.

Cooperation – Members should work together in a non-competitive environment.

Common goals – Members must rely on each other to achieve their shared goal.

Support by Social and Institutional Authorities – There should not be social or institutional authorities that explicitly or implicitly sanction contact, and there should be authorities that support positive contact.

More recently, **Pettigrew and Tropp, 2005**[17] identified the development of emotional connections between group members as an additional optimising condition.

In 2015, the Scottish government produced a review of the evidence as to **'What works to reduce prejudice and discrimination?'**[18] This report outlines that techniques to reduce bias can be roughly divided into two camps:

'The first is the theory of intergroup contact whereby association with other groups may reduce negative attitudes and promote inclusivity. The second comprises of theories …known as anti-bias theories. The latter assumes that contact alone is not sufficient, and that people need to re-educate themselves… These two broad approaches are not always separate; …most interventions will overlap to some extent.' *(ibid, p14).*

Fundamental to Integrated Education and the Anti-Bias in Education approach is the simultaneous application of both strategies. Firstly, Integrated schools have Protestants, Catholics and people who identify with other religious groups or none together in the school every day. Secondly, the Integrated Education movement promotes an anti-bias approach in schools as an activist method to tackle sectarianism and other biases for the purpose of reconciliation.

Things to think about and do

Bias

Be aware of your own bias
Take the: **Implicit Association Test**[19] – accept that it is part of us all.

Practice inclusion
Observe your and others' behaviours, give and receive feedback about your and others' biases, challenge yourself to be aware of your own tendencies.

Be a role model
talk about it, recognise the need to learn, be curious.

For a more detailed discussion of bias, watch **"Diffusing Bias"**[20]**,** featuring Binna Kandola, psychologist and diversity scholar, discussing different types of biases and ways individuals can work to minimise their impact.

Ideas adapted from: **pearnkandola.com**[21]

"Every moment is an amazing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world."

Dolores Huerta – Activist

3. Anti-Bias

What is anti-bias?

Anti-bias approaches are active processes which are recognised as being helpful in the reduction of prejudice. Being anti-bias means that you accept that power struggles and supremacy are at play between different social groups in all human societies. An anti-bias commitment and approach disrupts these systems by actively challenging your own and others' conscious and sub-conscious assumptions about each other. You will recognise yourself in positions of both supremacy and powerlessness.

> 'Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.'
>
> *Paulo Friere - Educator*

The development of Anti-Bias in Education

Work around anti-bias in educational settings emerged in the 1980s, primarily from the model developed by Louise Derman-Sparks and others in the USA. Derman-Sparks (1989) describes it as, *'an active/activist approach to challenging prejudice, stereotyping, bias and the 'isms'... It is not sufficient to be non-biased (and also highly unlikely), nor is it sufficient to be an observer. It is necessary for each individual to actively intervene, to challenge and counter the personal and institutional behaviours that perpetuate oppression.'*

Anti-Bias Education evolved from multi-cultural education which had developed in the 1970s as a response to the inequalities that fuelled the civil rights movement in the USA. Where, historically, multi-cultural education had a focus on cultural pluralism and an appreciation of diversity, Anti-Bias Education also sought to include a social justice emphasis. Over time, the anti-bias designation has shifted from 'Anti-Bias Curriculum' to 'Anti-Bias Education' and 'Multi-Cultural/Anti-Bias Education' to embrace the breadth and application of this work (Derman-Sparks and Ramsey, 2011). As well as engaging with both cultural pluralism and social justice, it encompasses ethos and practice in every aspect of school life, not simply any narrow understanding of 'curriculum'.

The Second Edition of **'Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves'**[22] was published in 2020 and is recommended reading.
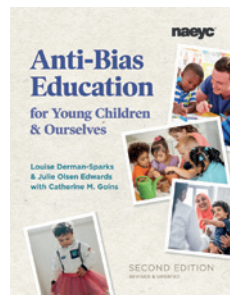
The four core goals of Anti-Bias in Education

Goal 1 — Identity

- Teachers will nurture each child's construction of knowledgeable and confident personal and social identities.
- Children will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.

Goal 2 — Diversity

- Teachers will promote each child's comfortable, empathetic interaction with people from diverse backgrounds.
- Children will express comfort and joy with human diversity, use accurate language for human differences, and form deep, caring connections across all dimensions of human diversity.

Goal 3 — Justice

- Teachers will foster each child's capacity to critically identify bias and will nurture each child's empathy for the hurt bias causes.
- Children will increasingly recognise unfairness (injustice), have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.

Goal 4 — Activism

- Teachers will cultivate each child's ability and confidence to stand up for oneself and for others in the face of bias.
- Children will demonstrate a sense of empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions.

*Source: Derman-Sparks, Edwards and Goins, (2020)*

> "Most activism is brought about by us ordinary people."
>
> **Carrie Chapman Catt – American Suffragette**

Each gear moves another

At a conference on early childhood anti-bias work in Berlin, Germany, in 2010 (Kinderwelten), teachers from 31 child care programmes displayed storyboards documenting the work. One centre had a wonderful way to show the relationship among the four Anti-Bias in Education goals. They made four wooden, interlocking gears, each representing one goal. Moving any one of the gears moved all the others *(ibid)*.

Goal 1 Identity

Goal 2 Diversity

Goal 3 Justice

Goal 4 Activism
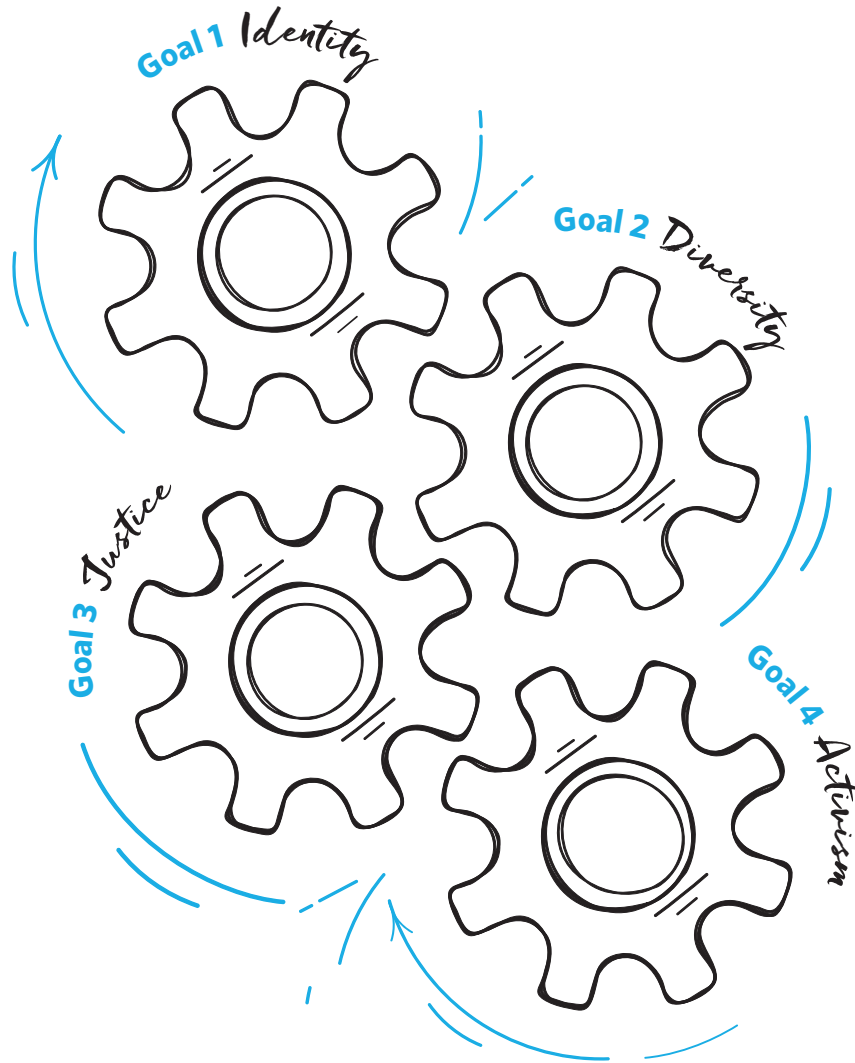
We are not all the same

In relation to the first two goals of recognising our identities and differences, Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2019) reflect as follows:

'Some teachers and parents are not sure they should encourage children to 'notice' and learn about differences among people. They may think it is best to teach only about how people are the same, worrying that talking about differences causes prejudice. While well intentioned, this concern arises from a mistaken notion about the sources of bias.'

'Differences do not create bias... **Children learn prejudice from prejudice - not from learning about human diversity.**' *(ibid)*

Understanding one's own identity and then recognising diversity between identities has become a practice which many educators will be familiar and perhaps comfortable with. The other goals of critically identifying unfairness and then developing skills and confidence to act against that unfairness are what set anti-bias strategies apart.

In common with much contemporary commentary, this approach asserts that it is not enough to be non-racist, non-sexist or non-discriminatory; rather, one needs to be anti-racist, anti-sectarian and so on. The term 'anti' implies activism and the term 'bias' refers to all of the 'isms'.

It may feel uncomfortable...

Because anti-bias approaches involve continuous wrangling with issues of power and privilege, this may raise strong feelings for you, as you negotiate bias in your life and in the lives of others. Your anti-bias journey will involve recognising and challenging some of your own previously unquestioned practices and behaviours. Whilst this may be unsettling, it also has the power to be transformational for ourselves, our communities and our society. Anti-bias approaches will only achieve a fairer society if we take responsibility for our roles in contributing to injustice and creating positive change. If you are engaging successfully in this process, you will begin to recognise your own bias about social groups. This is to be expected and welcomed. This is what progress feels like when you are tackling bias.

Anti-bias activism might be resisted by students, colleagues, parents and governors. It may be criticised as being part of some 'politically correct', 'liberal' or 'left-wing' agenda. That is why it is important to keep some truths at the core of our motivation and intentions. Bias has been the root of the unjust murder of millions of people across the globe through human history and in present day, such as the Second World War Holocaust, ethnic cleansing in the Bosnian war, 9/11 in the United States, genocide in Cambodia, Apartheid in South Africa, the Rohingya genocide in Mynamar and our own 'Troubles'. At the personal level, bias negatively impacts the mental health, personal potential,

"We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change... We need not wait to see what others do."

Mahatma Ghandi - Political Leader

happiness, success, achievement and economic attainment of thousands of people who are discriminated against daily, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Recognising anti-bias as an activism that engages with social justice issues, Escayg (2019) points out that we should explore not only our individual attitudes, interactions and relationships but should connect these to systemic and institutional aspects of power, privilege and oppression.

NICIE believes that if Anti-Bias in Education is widely and whole-heartedly adopted it has the potential to:

- **make a major contribution to peace and reconciliation;**
- **build a more just society;**
- **assist with the mental health crisis we are facing and;**
- **save lives.**

Starting with me

The most important thing about starting is to not feel overwhelmed!

The process of incorporating anti-bias strategies and approaches in your life and work must start with building your awareness of your own bias and the impact of bias in your life and in others' lives. The NICIE workshops on anti-bias are designed to support you with this process.

You might begin by simply spending time consciously reflecting on the social identities in your life and thinking about why you relate to those social groups. It might be that you have chosen to adopt or reject a certain social identity because you think you know how other people regard that social group. Derman-Sparks, Edwards and Goins (2020, p24-25) describe two aspects of identity: personal and social. Personal identity relates to one's personality, interests, talents etc., where social identity relates to the social groups

"Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step."

Martin Luther King - Activist

we identify with. We all use identifiers such as culture, gender, economic class, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, physical shape and ability, intellectual capacity, career, age, family structure, where you live, language, accent, skin colour etc. We feel good about some of our identities/identifiers while some other aspects may make us feel left-out, misunderstood, unpopular. It is these negative consequences and discriminations that Anti-Bias in Education seeks to notice and act upon.

Reflecting on which of your social identities you feel good about and which you feel bad about may help you to determine an initial focus. 'Social identities carry various statuses, assumptions and biases that affect how people are perceived and treated. These can powerfully enhance or undermine an individual's access to opportunities and resources. They make successful

life outcomes easier or harder for a person.' *(ibid, p25).*

Anti-bias in your educational practice

There are lots of different ways that you can start a process of developing your school's anti-bias approach. How you choose to do this will depend on the environment you work in, your own interests and your life experiences, and that is OK: this is personal; you are unique.

> Think about **aspects of your practice** that you could begin with:
>
> - classroom practice
> - personal and professional development
> - school development
> - whole school culture
> - school ethos
> - curriculum

> "Only by learning to live in harmony with your contradictions can you keep it all afloat."
>
> **Audre Lorde – Writer and LGBT Activist**

> Consider the 'Five Ps' of **Invitational Education**[23]
>
> - Are your **Places** welcoming, accessible, bright, interesting?
> - Are your **People** trusting, respectful, confident, intentional?
> - Are your **Programmes** developmental, constructive, engaging, diverse?
> - Are your **Processes** democratic, cooperative, collaborative, creative?
> - Are your **Policies** inclusive, fair, equitable, tolerant, just?

> Engage **reflective practice** tools such as considering the relationship between the following domains:
>
> - personal (your own interpretations and views)
> - professional (the customs and expectations of your profession)
> - policy (the policy environment, curriculum)
> - practice (what you do day-to-day as an educator)

In all aspects of the application of an anti-bias approach, you should refer to the four interconnecting goals as a touchstone:
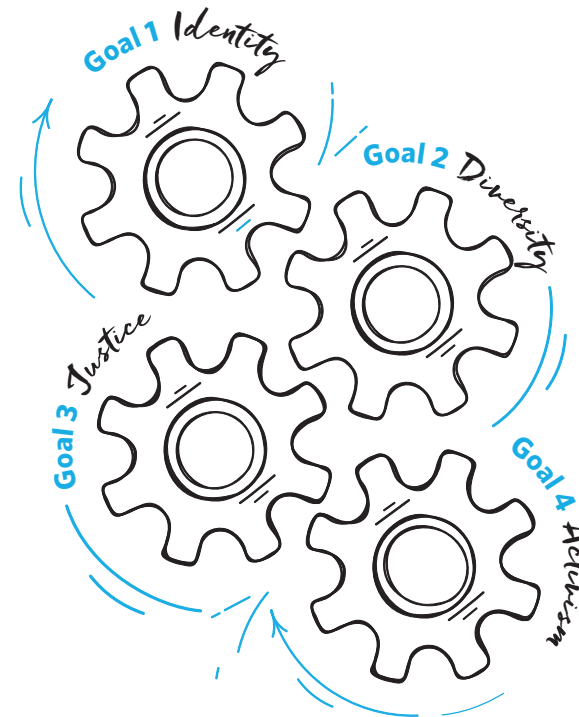
1. Identity
Knowing yourself

2. Diversity
Knowing others and seeing difference

3. Justice
Recognising unfairness

4. Activism
Standing up against bias

Things to think about and do

Starting your Anti-Bias Journey

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Look at the anti-bias pages on **NICIE**[24]'s website and if you are a participant on the NICIE Anti-Bias in Education programme, use your reflective journal to prompt your thinking. (Goal 1 – Identity)

Use your internet search engine to get definitions of 'prejudice', 'discrimination' and 'bias'.

Look at the documents your school produces and reflect on the use of language. Do you think anyone might feel excluded because of a particular phrase or sentence? (Goal 2 and 3 – Diversity and Justice)

Begin conversations with colleagues and others about classroom and whole school practices. Is there anything that has always been done that has on occasion made you feel uneasy?

Walk around your school and look at art, notices, symbols and emblems. What messages do they convey about identity, about who is present, noticed and valued? (Goal 1 – Identity)

Get together with a colleague (perhaps someone you don't normally talk to) to discuss your reflections and hear their opinions.
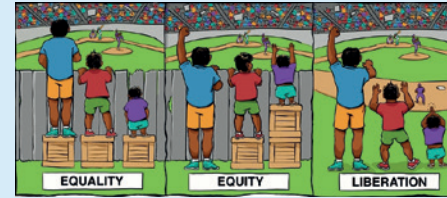
The 'fourth box' encourages us to think about the differences between equality, equity, and liberation.

'The4thbox'[25] is a tool that can be used with learners to explore and expand equality and issues of equity. It encourages us to continue the conversation and consider issues of privilege, power, disadvantage and advantage. By encouraging learners to continue the story in the 'fourth box', conversations can turn to the way society is structured as being the issue, rather than any one person's level of ability in any given sphere.

Remember that uncovering bias, stereotyping and discrimination is not a one-off activity, it's a process of continual discovery. Be wary if you think you have finished the job... you haven't!

Books: Be alive to the values that are implied in publications you use. For example, who is the active character and who plays the supporting role? (Goal 3 – Justice)

How do you actively listen to the views of your pupils and how do their experiences impact on culture, policy and practice across the school?

Consider your staffroom – who is there, and who isn't? What is talked about/what is not talked about?

Does your school reflect the diversity in your local community/wider society? (Goal 2 – Diversity)

How do we/can we represent the views and life experiences of those who aren't present?

What opportunities are there in school for you to be challenged on your own bias? (Goal 4 – Activism)

How do you feel when you are challenged on your own bias?
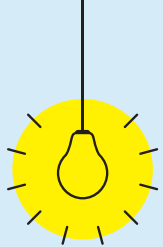
Set aside a few minutes each day to reflect on whatever aspect of bias arose for you that day.

These questions might help you start:

- Who expressed an aspect of their social identity positively in school today?

- Did you observe a pupil being put down by someone today?

- Was your interaction equitably distributed in the classroom? Why/why not?

- Do classroom visitors bust stereotypes about social groups or confirm them?

- What bias did you recognise but were unable to tackle today?

- What conversations did you have that touched on bias-busting?

- Are there aspects of your identity that you're proud of, would rather keep quiet, or want to change? – why is this the case?

Some key points from Part One

- To build a fairer and reconciled society, the things that make us different and similar need to be identified, discussed, explored and understood.

- Integrated Education is different because we do this intentionally, every day. The reason we do this is to build peace and reconciliation.

- We all have bias.

- Anti-Bias Education is based on four goals:

  1. **Identity** (knowing yourself);
  2. **Diversity** (knowing others and seeing difference);
  3. **Justice** (recognising unfairness) and;
  4. **Activism** (standing up against bias).

- There is no wrong place to start, it depends on your unique circumstances. The important thing is that you do start.

"When I dare to be powerful – to use my strength in the service of my vision – then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid."

Audre Lorde – Activist

PART TWO

Learning about Common Forms of ==Bias==

This part is designed to introduce you to and spark your thinking about some common forms of bias, or 'isms'. Derman-Sparks, Edwards and Goins define *'isms' as sets of 'social beliefs, policies, and actions designed to keep power and privilege in the hands of one group at the expense of another. Isms are reflected in a society's institutions, such as health, education, housing, employment and media.'* (2020, p8).

It is not possible to describe or explore all biases because they are not static. This publication is intended as an introduction and stimulus to encourage further thinking, reading and research. We have placed more emphasis on learning about sectarianism because that is at the heart of what the Integrated Education movement is about.

There are hundreds of global and local campaign groups, charities and other associations which have been set up to tackle specific issues and you should refer to those organisations for further information, research and classroom resources. We have included some here, but for a more comprehensive list, please refer to the Anti-Bias pages on NICIE's website.

The following eight sections are focussed on:

SECTARIANISM AND RELIGION

SECTARIANISM AND CULTURE

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

RACISM

SEXISM

CLASSISM

DISABLISM

AGEISM

1. Learning about Sectarianism and Religion

The stark facts remain that most Catholic Maintained schools are attended by pupils whose parents have identified them as Catholic and that most Controlled schools are attended by pupils whose parents have identified them as Protestant. For a fuller description of our education system, have a look at this **NI Assembly publication**[26], which outlines the various bodies involved.

The 2019-20 Department of Education data shows that, if one takes Integrated schools out of the calculation, less than 10% of the remaining schools have more than 10% of the 'other' community.

At the back of this publication there is a short section which introduces the education and community relations policies produced by our successive governments in their ongoing efforts to build peace and reconciliation in our society. There is widespread recognition

within these policies that education is of central concern. The concept of an education system which is inclusive of Protestants, Catholics and others has been recognised as a good idea for some time:

> 'In 1831 the Stanley letter set out a vision of a system of non-denominational education for all children in Ireland. Pupils would be taught non-spiritualist subjects in a network of national schools which were to be managed jointly by Catholics and Protestants; religious instruction was to take place outside school hours.' **Religion and Education briefing paper,**[27] *UU 2019.*

The question as to what religious, political, cultural and social conditions are needed to enable a single education system in our society is still relevant today. Sectarianism and segregation

continue to be the norm in many aspects of our society, the most marked of which are education and housing.

The intervention of Integration

The aim of the first Integrated school was to create an inclusive environment where Catholic, Protestant and other identities would feel a sense of belonging. Lagan College's first prospectus stated that the school aimed *'to provide a programme which meets the requirements not only of parents belonging to the two main churches but also to those of other faiths and none.' (Bardon, 2009).*

If Integrated Education is about reconciliation (and it is), then we must seek to connect the two traditions that represent our conflict. That is why we are still talking about Protestants and Catholics in Integrated schools.

Shifting identities

In contemporary Northern Ireland, the way we are expressing our social identities in relation to religion is changing. For example, the NI Life and Times Survey asks 16-year-olds about their attitudes every year. Their **report in May 2020**[28] shows that the number of sixteen year-olds describing themselves as 'Protestant' has reduced by more than a third between 2003 and 2018 and the numbers describing their religious identity as having 'no religion' has almost tripled in the same time frame.

Shifting patterns of self-identifications of NI population

Legend: Protestant, Catholic, Other, No Religion

	Protestant	Catholic	Other	No Religion
2003	41	47	0	12
2018	25	39	1	33
2001	53.1	43.8	0.4	2.7
2011	48.4	45.1	0.9	5.6

Young Life and Times Survey (16 year-olds) — 2003, 2018
Census (whole population) — 2001, 2011

Source: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2013/general/russell3013.pdf and https://www.ark.ac.uk/ARK/sites/default/files/2020-05/update132.pdf

The **Humanism**[29] non-religious world view is specifically mentioned in the NICIE **Statement of Principles**[30] of Integrated Education:

‘pupils will be introduced to the ideas, beliefs and practices of the major world religions and humanist philosophies, in a manner appropriate to their age and ability, and in line with the NI curriculum.’

Throughout recorded history there have been non-religious people who have believed that this life is the only life we have, that the universe is a natural phenomenon with no supernatural side, and that we can live ethical and fulfilling lives on the basis of reason and humanity. Today, people who share these beliefs and values are called humanists and this combination of attitudes is called Humanism.

Even though many of us are rejecting or changing our religious identities, people's lives here in Northern Ireland are still socially, culturally and politically influenced by the 'religion' they were brought up in: Protestant or Catholic.

The teaching of Religious Education (RE) in NI

‘Unlike most other areas of the curriculum, RE has often been regarded as controversial, with some people questioning whether it should be included at all in publicly funded schools. For this reason, it is important that schools articulate a

clear rationale for including RE on soundly educational grounds…. It could be suggested that the main reason why religion should be included in education is because it exists!’ **CCEA, 2014**[31]

Christianity has played and continues to play a significant role in our society and so we should learn about its different traditions here and discuss how they, and how other religious groups across the world, have come to be in conflict. Aside from this, the teaching of RE is a legal requirement for schools (NI Education and Libraries Order, 1986).

‘RE in Northern Ireland, as in other parts of the UK and many other countries, has been provided in schools for a very long time and is prescribed in law. The current legislation states: The curriculum for every grant aided school shall… include provision for religious education for all registered pupils at the school …Other legislation makes it clear that this also applies to special schools, but not to nursery schools. ‘All registered pupils’ in this regard applies to all pupils up to the statutory school leaving age of 16 years.’ **CCEA, 2014**[32]

The **Northern Ireland Core Syllabus for RE**[33] was devised by representatives of the four largest Christian denominations in 2007 (Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican and Methodist). A **2019 IEF research paper**[34] highlights that in the

2011 census here, these groups made up just over three-quarters (77%) of the population, with almost 6% describing themselves as other Christian, 1% as non-Christian and 17% as having no religion.

The CCEA non-statutory guidance materials for **primary schools**[35] and for **Key Stage 3**[36] suggest that the syllabus places emphasis on the Judeo-Christian tradition because that belief system has affected the structure of our society more than any other. They state that this should be balanced ‘with the growing need of children to develop broad intercultural competencies in their awareness and understanding of religion.’

Legislation

All school pupils are required to study RE from 4 to 16 years (unless their parents ask for them to be withdrawn from classes) All schools must provide a daily act of collective Christian worship.

RE Syllabus

The RE syllabus is drawn up by four Christian churches in NI:

Catholic   Presbyterian   Church of Ireland   Methodist

Source: IEF[37]

The Education Act (Northern Ireland) 1947 and the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 stipulate that daily Christian collective worship should be practiced in schools in Northern Ireland. Despite this being the legislation, it is not universally observed. Some people may question whether compulsory daily Christian worship is ethical in our contemporary multi-cultural society.

Parents/guardians in all school types have a legal right to request that their child does not take part in RE, but if they are reassured that there is no intention to change existing beliefs, they may agree to let their child take part. If opting out of Christian assemblies and RE classes (for example), is the preference of the family, then suitable and meaningful alternative teaching opportunities should be provided. Teachers also have a legal right to request to a school Board of Governors that they do not wish to teach RE on grounds of conscience.

Inclusive resources for the teaching of RE are not difficult to find on the CCEA website and many other places e.g. **RE Today**[38]; **RE Online**[39]; **BBC teach**[40]. Refer to the anti-bias pages on the NICIE website for further reading and resource suggestions.

Developing a Religious Education Policy in school

Your school should develop and regularly review a policy that deals with the teaching and representation of religion in school. This cannot be done effectively by one part of the school community and it is not feasible for a single person to have all the answers to these complex and fluid issues. The act of creating a policy that engages everyone affected by the policy in the creation of the policy is a form of activism.

The ethos of many schools in Northern Ireland is influenced by its religious character. However, an ethos that reflects any given religious belief does not necessarily prevent the school creating an environment where '... those of all faiths and none are respected, acknowledged and accepted as valued members of the school community.' (NICIE Statement of Principles).

Things to think about and do

Sectarianism and Religion

RE stands for Religious **Education** and that this is distinct from Religious **Instruction**. While both may happen within an Integrated school (and other schools), it is important that everyone understands the difference.

In keeping with Goal 1 - Identity, teachers should not deny their belief, but they should be cautious as to how it is communicated, given the power imbalance in the classroom.

As well as learning about religion and religions, we can learn from religion. RE provides an opportunity to explore the human quest for meaning in life. Pupils need time to reflect, to discuss, to explore and research (Goal 2 – Diversity).

There are differing views about the place of religion in school. There should be opportunities for teachers, pupils and others to understand why things are done in certain ways and be mutually supportive when challenges arise (Goal 3 – Justice).

Visitors can add great interest to a school assembly but groups that exhibit blatant bias and/or are seeking to proselytise are not appropriate in an Integrated or other religiously inclusive school. Readings and reflections/prayers should include those who have no religious belief. (Goal 2 – Diversity).

Create opportunities for teachers, pupils and others to come together to explore the issues related to religion in school and develop a RE policy which considers the issues (Goal 4 – Activism).

Explore special places in different faith traditions: different churches and other places of worship; types of worship and rituals; pilgrimages.

By talking openly about your own identity in relation to religion, you give 'permission' for children to do the same (Goal 1 – Identity).

Be mindful of the faiths that are not represented in your school. How can these be incorporated in a way that does not stereotype?

"*All conflict is about difference; whether the difference is race, religion or nationality.*"

John Hume – Joint Winner of Nobel Peace Prize

2. Learning about Sectarianism and Culture

Not just about religion…

The terms Protestant and Catholic (in our society) influence our cultural, national and political identities. We combine a multitude of indicators relating to our social identities in order to determine whether a person is one of 'us' or 'them', for example: names, sports played, where you live, name of your school. Even though many people in Northern Ireland are rejecting the labels of 'Protestant' and 'Catholic', sectarianism still exists. Tackling sectarianism therefore isn't just about religious identity, it is about tackling cultural, political and national identity differences too.

Definitions of sectarianism

Liechty and Clegg (2001) in their book about sectarianism in Northern Ireland present the following as a working definition of sectarianism:

- a system of attitudes, actions, beliefs, and structures;
- at personal, communal, and institutional levels;
- which always involves religion, and typically involves a negative mixing of religion and politics;
- which arises as a distorted expression of positive, human needs especially for belonging, identity and the free expression of difference.

In 2019, a **Review of Sectarianism in Northern Ireland**[41] defined sectarianism as having a *'dual meaning: it had something to do with religion and something to do with groups separated by hostility'*.

In order to tackle sectarianism, the review recommends that *'every school should make use of known best practice in developing positive attitudes towards those from other communities.'*

The intentions and consequences of sectarianism

One way to gauge whether or not speech, an event, an action or a decision can be judged to be sectarian is to look not only at the intention of the person or group involved, but also at the outcome or potential outcome of the speech or action, in as far as this can be foreseen. Common out-workings of sectarianism include the following features:

• hardening the boundaries between groups;
• overlooking others;
• belittling, dehumanising or demonising others;
• justifying or collaborating in the domination of others;
• physically or verbally intimidating or attacking others. *(ibid)*

As our society becomes more culturally diverse, natural opportunities are created to explore other cultures and ethnicities alongside the two dominant ones in Northern Ireland. Many schools here are comfortable with celebrations that originate from other cultures but are more challenged by celebrating the local diversity between Irish and British culture. There is an opportunity to talk about all cultural and religious celebrations and holidays including, for example: Remembrance Sunday, St. Patrick's Day, Passover, Hanukkah, Chinese New Year, Diwali and Ramadan.
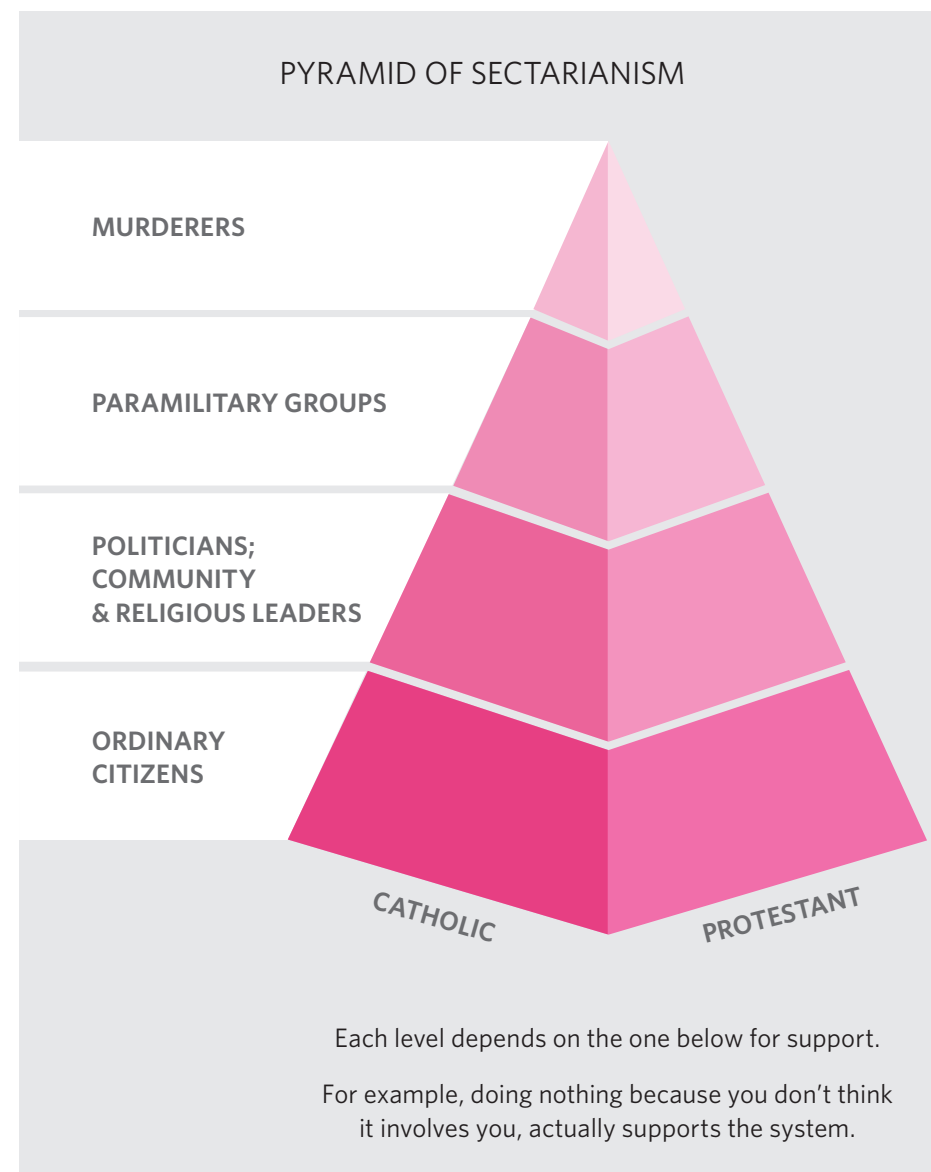
The Northern Ireland Executive community relations policy since 2013, 'Together – Building a United Community' states that; *"From an early age, children must be encouraged to explore difference and to learn what it means to live as part of an interdependent, inclusive society. Research shows that sectarian and racist attitudes and behaviours can manifest in childhood and it is therefore not an option to wait until adolescence to intervene."*

The GTCNI teacher competencies[42] refer to teachers' *'need to take account of the significant features of pupils' cultures, languages and faiths and to address the implications for learning arising from these.'*

Resources in relation to race, culture and ethnicity include the materials associated with the CRED Policy (2011), the revised NI Curriculum (2007), the Education Authority's (2018) revised **Toolkit for Diversity in the Primary School**[43], the CCEA resource **Teaching Controversial Issues**[44] at Key Stage 3. These outline some of the most contentious issues relating to differences here in Northern Ireland and provide clear links to curriculum and ideas for practice.

Education Scotland have great resources for all age groups. Please refer to the anti-bias pages of NICIE's website for links and more reading and resources about sectarianism.

CCEA has a wide range of resources and ideas, published in 2019, about reconciliation and sectarianism, including how to use the **'Pyramid of Sectarianism'**[45].

PYRAMID OF SECTARIANISM

MURDERERS

PARAMILITARY GROUPS

POLITICIANS; COMMUNITY & RELIGIOUS LEADERS

ORDINARY CITIZENS

CATHOLIC   PROTESTANT

Each level depends on the one below for support.

For example, doing nothing because you don't think it involves you, actually supports the system.

> "Preservation of one's own culture does not require contempt or disrespect for other cultures."
>
> **Cesar Chave – Union Leader and Activist**

Sectarianism and Culture

How easy is it to discuss the differences between being Protestant and Catholic amongst colleagues? (Goal 2 - Diversity).

Does your school engage with different sports/food/music/arts that form part of the British and Irish identities?

The Channel 4 'Derry Girls' chalkboard, 'The similarities between Protestants and Catholics' (Series 2, Episode 1, available on Netflix), could be used as a humorous starting point for conversation with colleagues and/or pupils.

What does the symbolism around the school building say about the presence and balance of Catholic and Protestant identities?

Avoiding talking about sectarianism gives credence to the viewpoint that it cannot be discussed in an open and fair manner.

Which cultural celebrations are marked and which are not marked in school? Why?

How do you react if a learner says, 'I'm British, not Irish' (or vice versa)?

Do you have agreed way (such as in a policy) that the school recognises the significance of cultural symbols and celebrations?

The teaching of history provides an opportunity to explore competing narratives about major historical events, such as the creation of Northern Ireland in 1921.

3. Learning about Racism

The difference between race and ethnicity

The modern concept of 'race' originated from anthropologists and philosophers in the 18th century, who used geographical location and physical traits like skin colour to do what humanity loves to do: separate people into social groups. This practice then fuelled the idea that some racial types are superior to others.

Whilst today the terms race and ethnicity are sometimes used interchangeably, race is more related to biological and/or physical differences whereas ethnicity is more related to differences such as language, nationality and culture.

There is no universal or biological definition of what constitutes different racial or ethnic groups, these definitions are constructed within the minds of individuals and in the mind of society as we attempt to categorise ourselves and others into social groups. Viewing race and ethnicity in this way, helps us to understand why the labels used for different racial/ethnic groups are sometimes fluid.

Racism

Racism is defined as a belief that race and/or ethnicity is a determinant of traits and capability and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of one group over another.

The **NI Life and Times survey**[46] asks adults in Northern Ireland questions about views on minority ethnic groups. Some key findings from the 2017 survey relating to racism are:

- 36% wouldn't accept an Eastern European as a close friend (rising to 38% for 18-24 year olds);
- 52% wouldn't accept an Irish Traveller as a close friend;
- 47% wouldn't accept a Muslim as a close friend;
- A third of 18 to 24-year-olds and over a third of over 65's responded that they wouldn't accept a Muslim as a neighbour in their local area.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland record hate crimes that are reported to them. Their **records**[47] show consistent trends over the last ten years where the reporting of:

- racist incidents and crimes have remained steady in numbers;
- sectarian incidents and crimes have decreased slightly (with a peak of reports each year in July);
- homophobic incidents and crimes are increasing.

It is important to remember that the reporting of crime can only provide a small part of any picture. Reporting a hate incident and/or crime may involve intimidation, language barriers, fear of retribution and not being supported by the police, and so it is reasonable to assume that there is a high level of under-reporting. The reduction of reports in 2020 in the table below could be attributed in part to the effects of the pandemic. For many months during 2020, people in Northern Ireland were asked to stay at home and change behaviours in order to reduce contact to the emergency services and protect the National Health Service.

Hate motivated incidents and crimes in Northern Ireland (2018 – 2020)

Motivation	Total Number of incidents recorded		Total number of crimes recorded	
	Oct 2018 – Sep 2019	Oct 2019– Sep 2020	Oct 2018 – Sep 2019	Oct 2019 – Sep 2020
Racist	1,075	881	695	583
Homophobic	265	344	181	244
Sectarian	879	870	637	627
Disability	101	84	65	55
Faith/Religion	47	31	26	12
Transphobic	50	68	24	34

BLACK LIVES MATTER

The Black Lives Matter Movement

The name **Black Lives Matter**[48] signals condemnation of the unjust killings of black people by police (black people are far more likely to be killed by police in the United States than white people) and the demand that society value the lives and humanity of black people as much as it values the lives and humanity of white people.

During the early stages of the global pandemic lockdown in 2020, the murder of George Floyd prompted a global upsurge of the Black Lives Matter campaign. Movements such as this provide timely opportunities to have conversations about structural and systemic racism with learners. The history of slavery and white privilege are also important topics to research.

The 'All Lives Matter' campaign serves as evidence of the opposing views in society about the existence of racism, views on social justice, the rampant power of 'fake news' and the desire of humans to simplify complex arguments to a simple sound bite.

> "We wouldn't have Black Lives Matter if we hadn't had 300 years of Black Lives Don't Matter."
>
> **Jane Elliot – American Educator**

As a schoolteacher in Riceville, Iowa, Jane Elliott became known for her powerful 'Blue eyes/Brown eyes' classroom exercise which she conducted on April 5th, 1968, the day after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. She sorted her Third-Graders (eight and nine-year-olds) into those who were treated well and those who were treated badly, on the basis of eye colour in order to teach an experiential lesson about racism. The full experiment can be watched on YouTube: **'A Class Divided'**[49].

A powerful example of how systematic racism can be acted out subconsciously was outlined by Reni Eddo-Lodge in her 2018 book, 'Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race,' where she highlights teacher assessment and the 'marking down' of 'black boys' (research carried out in 2009). The teachers' racist bias of their black male students' ability to succeed, though subconscious, impacted the academic and career paths they presented to the students. This brings home how personal bias can have significant impact on the lives of the pupils in your classroom. What is most troubling is the fact that much of our bias remains unconscious and is subtly created by large structural forces over which we may feel we cannot impact as one individual. Fortunately, anti-bias work can be done individually and can create positive change.

Racism

Watch this **interview with Ruby Bridges**[50] on The Daily Social Distancing Show on YouTube. At the age of six, she was the first black child to be taught in an all-white school in New Orleans in the 1960's. It highlights the importance of acceptance by a teacher and the need for policy to support Integration.

The short BBC video **'Racism in Northern Ireland: 'Nobody born to be a racist'**[52] (June 2020), outlines the experiences of some black and minority people living in NI. Role-play activities can be a good way to "step into the shoes" of others to understand a different view.

This BBC Bitesize clip '**Not-racist v anti-racist: what's the difference?**'[51] explains brilliantly and simply what the difference between being non-racist and being anti-racist is (Goal 2 – Diversity).

"There's a big difference between being not-racist and being anti-racist. I know it doesn't seem like it. I know that both of these things seem equally good, but they're not."

John Amaechi – Psychologist

NETFLIX

Consider the Black Lives Matter movement and the impact it has had – watch Netflix documentary '13th', which makes a compelling argument about the impact that slavery has on black lives today (Goal 4 – Activism).

The **Corrymeela Community**[54] is an NI based charity focussed on peace building. They have collaborated with an organisation called 'Facing History' on their **work in schools**[55]. Although it is US based, Facing History has great **educator materials**[56] and resources relating to issues such as racism, the holocaust, genocide, justice, anti-Semitism, religious intolerance, bullying and ostracism.

Review your library, classroom books, displays and other resources with an anti-racist lens.

CCEA resource on Local and Global Citizenship[53] (Learning for Life and Work) includes a focus on racism.

Can you and your pupils identify what racial and/or ethnic identities are expressed in your local community and/or across Northern Ireland?

Other organisations that tackle racism and ethnicity within Northern Ireland and provide support directly to the communities include:

Northern Ireland Council for Racial Equality[57]

Migrant Centre Northern Ireland[58]

An Munia Tober[59]

Bryson House Intercultural[60]

4. Learning about Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Saying the right thing

One of the barriers to talking about any social identity is a fear of using a word that is insulting without realising it. Whilst it is important to be informed, no one gets it right all the time. Things change, for example the use of the word 'queer' was previously viewed as derogatory, but recently has been reclaimed by some people in the LGBTQ+ community as a way to refer to themselves. If you are unsure, ask – individuals may have their own preferences about language, especially of their gender pronoun. In any case, if you do not identify as part of a community, you should not use a word that has been historically derogatory.

Some basics relating to sexual orientation:

Biological sex and gender identity are not the same thing. Biological sex refers to a child's biology at birth and gender identity is how you see yourself. Your gender identity relates closely to characteristics, such as femininity and masculinity, which are socially constructed. The average age of **gender awareness**[61] is at 3/4 years old, with 80% understanding gender identity while in primary school at 7/8 years old.

Our gender typically aligns with the sex we were assigned at birth (cisgender) however, this is not always the case. People whose personal gender identity or gender expression is always different to the gender they were assigned at birth are transgender. 'Trans' has its origins in Latin, meaning 'cross, over, beyond, on the other side'. People whose personal gender identity or gender expression is sometimes, but not always, different to the gender they were assigned at birth are gender fluid.

LGBTQ+ is an acronym for the following identities: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning or Queer. It refers to a community of people that do not identify as heterosexual and/ or cisgender. It refers to people who question their gender identity and/ or sexual orientation. The '+' refers to other sexual orientations, such as intersex and non-binary.

Sexuality and sexual orientation are often incorrectly used interchangeably. Sexuality is how much or how little you desire sex (i.e. your sex drive). For example, people who identify as asexual have no sex drive. Sexual orientation is part of your sexuality and refers to your romantic, emotional and sexual attraction to a particular gender. For example:

- Man attracted to woman: Heterosexual or Straight
- Woman attracted to woman: Homosexual, Gay or Lesbian
- Person attracted to their own and other genders: Bisexual

The Stonewall charity has a comprehensive glossary of **terms and descriptors**[62], including the definition of cis, pan, dead naming, femme, intersex and so on.

The experiences of young people who identify as LGBTQ+

Youth Action published '**Still Shouting**[63]: The needs and experiences of young people in Northern Ireland who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT)' in 2017.

The research found that:

68% of respondents reported being bullied;

36% said thought they had achieved lower results because of their sexual orientation;

81% reported having suicidal thoughts;

52% had self- harmed;

25% had attempted suicide.

'While some young people noted being aware of a non-heterosexual identity 'since they were born' or 'for as long as I can remember', generally they reported becoming aware of this between the ages of 11 – 16 years. Among those who provided a specific age at which they became aware of their sexual orientation, the average was 13 years old.' *(Still Shouting, 2017)*

'Having been given appropriate sex education in school would have helped. Making learning about same-sex relationships in 'Learning for Life and Work' class compulsory; instead everything is based around heterosexual relationships.' *(ibid)*

The survey highlighted that many transgender young people are particularly in need of additional support, with 90% of trans young people from Northern Ireland who took part in the survey reporting that they had contemplated suicide and 49% having attempted suicide. *(ibid)*

The use of drugs and alcohol is higher within the LGBTQ+ community, as highlighted in a recent **report**[64] by the **Rainbow Project**[65].

The **Stonewall School Report 2017**[66], which conducted research with young people in Britain, found that:

Nearly half of LGBT pupils (45%), including 64% of trans pupils are bullied for being LGBT in Britain's schools.

Half of LGBT pupils hear homophobic slurs 'frequently' or 'often' at school.

Just one in five LGBT pupils have been taught about safe sex in relation to same-sex relationships.

More than two in five trans young people have attempted to take their own life, and one in five lesbian, gay and bi students who aren't trans have done the same.

In 2017, the Department of Education published **research**[67] with post-primary pupils who identified as gay, lesbian or bi-sexual in Northern Ireland which found that:

53.9% of respondents came out while in post-primary school;

27.4% of respondents had not spoken to anyone in school about their LGB identity;

69.4% of respondents had spoken to other pupils in school regarding their LGB identity;

65% of LGB respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had a supportive group of friends at school;

20.1% had spoken to members of staff in school regarding their LGB identity.

'There is some evidence to suggest that children as young as eight years old may begin to question their sexual orientation, and from early adolescence, begin to identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual.' **(CCEA RSE guidance)**[68]

The Office for National Statistics estimated in 2017 that 4.2% of the population of 16-24-year-olds identify as lesbian, gay or bi-sexual (LGB), which is a higher percentage estimation than for older adults. Their report on sexual identity found that there are fewer people identifying as LGB in Northern Ireland than in the rest of the UK but that in general, people are increasingly recognising and reporting this aspect of their identity in survey data.

'Once in sex education, I asked about safe sex in same-sex relationships and I was told that it was 'inappropriate' and 'that is not suitable for classroom discussion'. I was told to leave the room. *(Dorian, 13)* Source: Stonewall School Report 2017

Same-sex families

Creating safety in school for your learners who identify as LGBTQ+ (or are questioning their sexual identities) is also important for your students who have parents / guardians that are in same-sex relationships. Anti-bias work includes examining

"My teacher let us watch the film 'Pride' and we discussed homophobia. It was nice to know that he supports LGBT people, in case I needed someone to talk to."

Caitlin, 15 – Stonewall School Report, 2017

bias that family structures are heteronormative, with a mother and father.

In 2019 there were 212,000 same-sex families in the UK, having increased by 40.0% since 2015. The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 legalised same-sex marriage in England and Wales from March 2014 and from December 2014 in Scotland.

Same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland was legalised from February 2020. With the change in legislation, an increasing number of LGBTQ+ adults are becoming parents. The number of same-sex couples living as a family, with or without children, has increased by more than half since 2015, according to figures from the **Office for National Statistics**[69] (ONS).

Things to think about and do

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

When introducing yourself, you could also give your pronouns: E.g., 'I'm Mrs Roberts and my pronouns are she/her.' This normalises sharing pronouns and speaking up when someone uses the wrong ones and is an indicator to any trans students that you are aware of the issues around gender expression and are an ally. (Goal 4 – Activism)

Does your school have a policy? The Department of Education states that every school should have a policy setting out how the school will address Relationships and Sexuality Education. The most recent DE guidance is Circular 2015/22: **RSE Guidance DENI 2015**[70].

In 2019 CCEA published Relationships and Sexuality Education guidance updates for both **primary**[71] and **post-primary schools**[72] and EA published '**Guidance for Schools**'[73], EOTAS Centres and Youth Service on Supporting Transgender Young People.'
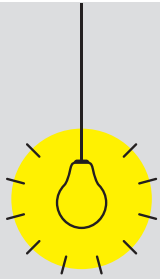
Some schools have invested energy in the formation of a Gay-Straight Alliance, enabling awareness raising and increasing support networks. Shimna Integrated College started the first group in a Northern Ireland school in 2010 and created a **video**[74] to share their journey. Hazelwood Integrated College also have a 'Gay, Straight Whatever' Group, formed in 2016. (Goal 4 – Activism).

CCEA has also produced a very comprehensive list of links for **post-primary resources**[75] and their section on **LGBTQ+ matters**[76] has links to lots of Northern Ireland relevant educational resources for all ages.

The Education Equality Curriculum Guide[77] - Supporting Teachers in Tackling Homophobia in School, was published in 2018 by Cara Friend and The Rainbow Project.

Youth Action[78], **HereNI**[79], **The Rainbow Project**[80], **Transgender NI**, **SailNI**[81] provide a range of support for LGBTQ+ people, families and the wider community in Northern Ireland.

Cara-Friend[82] provide 'Educating the Educators' workshops for teachers in Northern Ireland.

Childline[83] has online support resources for young people.

5. Learning about Sexism

Definition of Sexism

Sexism is bias based on the belief that the members of one sex are less intelligent, able, skilful etc. than the members of the other sex, most often used in relation to women.

Sexism is so very deeply ingrained that sometimes it is hard to notice the everyday stereotyping of women and men and how the out-workings of that affect what we wear, how we speak and behave as well as our role in society, the job we do, how we are treated... and so on. Women are disproportionately affected by sexism as it impacts all aspects of the lived experience, from work and professional life, to representation in positions of power, issues of criminality, abuse and personal safety and everyday instances of bias.

The **Belfast Telegraph**[84] reported in 2020 that more than a quarter of female MLAs have been sexually harassed during their political life. Their survey revealed that 70% have had sexist remarks made to their face by men, and three-quarters have experienced sexism on social media.

The impact of systemic sexism on men's lives is becoming more recognised in recent years. The term 'toxic masculinity' (which doesn't mean that all men are inherently toxic!) has been used to describe the negative and sometimes self-destructive impacts of masculinity on men. It can be **defined**[85] as a set of behaviours and beliefs that include the following:

- suppressing emotions or masking distress;
- maintaining an appearance of hardness;
- violence as an indicator of power (think: "tough-guy" behaviour).

In other words: Toxic masculinity is what can come of teaching boys that they should not express emotion openly; that they have to be 'big and strong'; and that anything other than that makes them 'feminine', the implication of which is small and weak.

The #metoo movement is a global viral and social movement against sexual abuse and sexual harassment committed by men in powerful and/or prominent positions against women. #metoo was originally coined in 2006, but came to prominence during 2017, when powerful Holywood film producer and now convicted sex offender, Harvey Weinstein's sexual predatory and exploitative behaviour was exposed.

Sexism in school

National Education Union research in 2017[86], conducted in England, 'It's just Everywhere – Sexism in Schools' asserted that gender stereotyping is a typical feature of school culture, often reinforced through mundane, 'everyday' actions. Their research findings included:

25% of all secondary school teachers say they witness gender stereotyping and discrimination in their school daily, and a further quarter say they witness it on a weekly basis.

34% of primary school teachers say they witness gender stereotyping in their school on at least a weekly basis.
54% say they witness it on at least a termly basis.

36% of female students in mixed-sex schools say they have personally been treated differently on account of their gender, compared to **15%** of male students.

27% of secondary school teachers say they would not feel confident tackling a sexist incident if they experienced or witnessed it in school.

In addition, the report concludes that sexism and sexual harassment in schools has been normalised and is rarely reported.

Only 14% of students who have experienced sexual harassment reported it to a teacher.

Just 6% of students who have experienced or witnessed the use of sexist language in school reported it to a teacher.

Things to think about and do

Sexism

Try taking, as a conversation starter, the sexism quiz[87].

EQUALITEACH
equality training and consultancy

Equaliteach[88] has comprehensive resources on lots of equality issues, including 'Outside the box' – A whole-school approach to promoting gender equality and tackling sexism and sexual harassment in schools.

A mighty GIRL

A mighty girl[89] has a huge selection of resources for educators which bust stereotypes about women and girls.

To what extent do you see girls and boys being funnelled into gender-influenced careers? (Goal 3 – Justice)

national education union

National Education Union[90] Research and resources.

Practical strategies for challenging gender stereotypical choices and behaviours in primary schools

BOYS' THINGS AND GIRLS' THINGS?
www.neu.org.uk/breakingthemould

Early years and primary resources: **Breaking the Mould**[91].

'**No More Boys and Girls – can our kids go gender free?'**[92] watch this BBC documentary relating to educational attainment and gender.

The Red Pill movie[93] documents Cassie Jaye's journey exploring an alternate perspective on gender equality and power. This documentary divides opinion amongst feminists and was funded by organisations with right-wing political leanings. Some viewers believe it misrepresents the fundamentals of sexism. What do you think? (Goal 2 – Diversity)

women's aid
Federation Northern Ireland

Women's Aid Federation of Northern Ireland[94] have a section on their website which signposts to local organisations which provide support for women and men.

Research #metoo[95], a global movement against sexual harassment and violence.

me too.

Raise Your Voice[96] is a partnership organisation tackling sexual harassment and sexual violence across Northern Ireland and hosts information workshops on issues such as consent.

RAISE YOUR VOICE AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT

BELFAST FEMINIST NETWORK BFN

The **Belfast Feminist Network**[97] has been organising since 2010 and mostly use Facebook to promote their activities and support services.

The **Men's Advisory Project**[98] Northern Ireland provide confidential support and signposting services.

Look around your classroom and at the teaching resources you use with an anti-sexism lens.

Can you do some stereotype busting? Perhaps children could draw images of how they see fire fighters, nurses, pilots and then you could introduce a real-life male nurse, female pilot and fire fighter.

What would you do in the following situations?

"I have [heard] a male member of staff saying to another member of staff 'Don't be such a girl' in a derogative manner, which is particularly strange because we work in a girls' school" – *Post-primary teacher (NEU research, 2017)*

The uniform regulations are quite strict in our school. I overheard a female teacher tell a pupil that she should take the make-up off and roll her skirt back down because 'that type of thing can distract the male teachers.'

6. Learning about Disablism

Disablism and ableism

Both of these terms describe disability discrimination, but the emphasis is different.

- **Disablism emphasises bias/ prejudice/discrimination against people with disabilities, which prevents them from having equal opportunities and their rights respected.**

- **Ableism emphasises discrimination in favour of people without disabilities.** [99]

The **Equality Commission**[100] for Northern Ireland defines disability as: 'A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

The social and medical models of disability

One way to think about disability and society is to consider the medical and social models. The social model asserts that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets.

Or they can be caused by people's attitudes to difference, like assuming people with disabilities cannot do certain things.

The **social model**[101] helps us recognise some barriers that might make life harder for people with disabilities. Removing these barriers offers people with disabilities more independence, choice and control. Not everyone uses the social model. How anyone chooses to talk about their impairment is up to them.

Medical model of disability	Social model of disability
A traditional, medical model of disability believes the person is disabled by their medical condition.	The social model believes we are disabled by negative social attitudes, discrimination, physical barriers, or lack of access, not by the impairment itself.
Perceived as: • Not a 'normal' person • A medical problem • Dependent on others • Unable to make decisions • Less equal	Perceived as: • An equal citizen with equal rights • Someone who, like everyone, needs medical care at times • Independent • Able to make decisions
Examples: • a student can't complete the assignment because she's blind/ visually impaired. • A group of students with autism can't attend a local pantomime show because 'their behaviour will upset the other audience members'.	Examples: • a student can't complete the assignment because it wasn't provided in Braille or an alternative format. • A group of students with autism can't attend the local pantomime because of the venue's discriminatory attitude and lack of staff training.

Source: www.equallives.org.uk

Special Educational Needs and disablism

Schools have a legal duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' in educational provision for students with additional needs to create inclusive classroom environments. In January 2019, the Department of Education distinguished 'Special Educational Needs' (SEN) into five overarching categories:

- cognition and learning;
- social, behavioural, emotional and well-being;
- speech, language and communication needs;
- sensory; and
- physical needs.

In 2020, an Education Authority report estimated that 1 in 4 of the school population in Northern Ireland have some form of 'special educational need'. This comes as little surprise to teachers and other educators, who are constantly adapting to learners with a range of sometimes complex needs, none of which can be neatly described by any given label or continuum. **Research by the NI Department of Health**[102] published in 2018, states that the estimated prevalence of autism

within the school aged population in NI had increased from 1.7% in 2008/9 to 2.9% in 2017/18, with males almost four times as likely to be identified with autism than females, which is in line with international findings.

Professor Barry Carpenter has presented some **interesting ideas**[103] about the complex needs of young people in classrooms today, as well as suggestions as to how educationalists should respond to them. In common with so many before him, his conclusions centre around recognising the humanity and individual experiences that we each have, which clearly connects with the anti-bias approach.

Children with disabilities have the right to an education and the right to have a say in how they are educated. Policy and legislative developments in relation to people with disabilities over the past few decades have consistently recommended a 'rights-based' approach. In other words, the perspective of the person (child) is placed centrally. Putting people who are or feel different 'centre-stage' to share their story and their truth, supports others to understand and be better allies. In doing so, the school community can be better equipped to notice and speak out about unfairness and find collective ways to challenge and change it.

The Anti-Bias in Education goals of: Identity – Diversity – Justice Activism are in keeping with this rights-based approach.
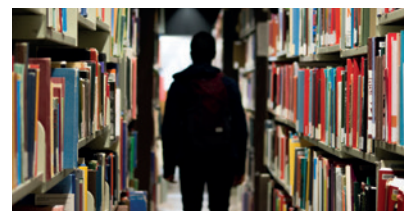
Behaviour is a form of communication.

What bias are you bringing to your students, consciously or unconsciously, through your behaviour?

Does expert guidance inform the schools' policies and practices in relation to disability? When was the last time you had training in this area?

Are people with disabilities visible? (Goal 1 – Identity)

What are your school's anti-bullying policies? Disablist bullying is behaviour or language that makes a child or young person feel unwelcome or marginalised because of a perceived or actual disability or need (Goal 4 – Activism).

Are resources appropriately adapted on a regular basis so that students with disabilities are not an afterthought?

Disability Action Northern Ireland[104] have a range of resources and provide support for people with disability.

Autism Northern Ireland[105] offer support, training and resources.

Family Support Northern Ireland[106] has a range of resources and signposts to support organisations for families, including those with a disability.

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership[107] (CYPSP) brings together a range of agencies, including voluntary and community sector organisations, that aim to improve the lives of children and young people in Northern Ireland. Their website has links to many different support organisations and resources.

7. Learning about Classism

Definitions of classism

- Differential treatment based on social class or perceived social class.
- The systematic oppression of subordinated class groups to advantage and strengthen the dominant class groups.
- The systematic assignment of characteristics of worth and ability based on social class.

Classism[108] is held in place by a system of beliefs and cultural attitudes that ranks people according to economic status, family lineage, job status, level of education, and other divisions.

The sort of assumptions that we make about people from different classes include: levels of intelligence; political opinion; cleanliness; social skills; and ability to parent effectively. We ascertain people's social class based on cues such as language, accent, clothing, jewellery, address and name.

Academic selection and classism

The education system in Northern Ireland has a strong relationship with economic class, especially at post-primary level. Grammar schools are associated with wealthier families and higher levels of academic achievement and non-selective schools with poorer families and lower academic achievement. By the time many young people are transitioning to post-primary, they already have received messages of how their perceived economic class relates to their academic potential and life trajectory. This division about where one 'belongs' educationally has been the focus of research about the relationship between class and academic underachievement in Northern Irish schools.

In 2020, Stranmillis University College's Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement published **Educational Underachievement in Northern Ireland Evidence Summary**[109]. This research grapples with this sense of where one 'fits' (or does not). The social identity and academic expectation differences between selective and non-selective schools and the impacts these have on underachievement are important. This research paper asserts that 'better understanding the deeply-rooted nature of these differences is a first step in challenging the perpetuation of social and educational inequalities' *(ibid, p20-21)*. The report also expresses concern

that the curriculum may be prioritising knowledge valued by the middle class and so disadvantages working class children.

In 2012, a team of researchers from Queen's University Belfast and Stranmillis University College was awarded funding for a three-year research project entitled **'Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation'**[110]. The study aimed to understand some of the reasons for differential educational achievement within and between deprived areas in Northern Ireland. The report outlines the complexity of the issue and recognises factors at play in four key domains: individual, social and community, family and school.

The researchers noted factors in schools which inhibited educational achievement and outlined them as follows:

'...low expectations on the part of some schools and teachers; where there were weak school-community linkages; with some schools being perceived as "middle-class and detached" by parents and pupils; schools with high rates of absenteeism and exclusion and where there was insufficient support or resources for children with SEN.' *(QUB, 2017)*.

Section 75[111] of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without;
- persons with dependants and persons without.

Economic class is not mentioned specifically, but many of the characteristics impact a person's ability to be economically comfortable. The promotion of 'equality of opportunity',

which is the phrase used in the Act, entails more than the elimination of discrimination. It requires proactive action to promote equality of opportunity and encourages public authorities to take action to address inequality among the groups listed above.

In 2015, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland published research conducted by Queen's University Belfast **Education Inequalities in Northern Ireland**[112], which focused on the nine characteristics of Section 75. The report highlighted that people who identified or have been identified as being from the particular groups studied, are disadvantaged in relation to educational attainment. The research shows how being a member of more than one of these disadvantaged groups has a multiplier effect, for example, being a Protestant working class boy.

- Males have lower levels of attainment. This inequality may contribute to fewer male school leavers entering higher education than females.

- Children from the Traveller community and Roma children have some of the lowest levels of attainment of all equality groups.

- From 2007/08 to 2014/15, 50 - 80% of children from the Traveller/Roma communities left school with no GCSEs. 0.5 - 3.5% of all pupils left school with no GCSEs.

- Students with SEN or a disability have lower attainment levels than students without any SEN or disability, and are less likely to go on to higher education.

- Protestants persistently have lower levels of attainmnet than Catholics at GCSE and A Level.

- There is persistent underachievement and lack of progress of working class Protestants, particularly males.

- Those in some equality groups are subjected to bullying because of perceived differences.

Integrated Education and social class

The NICIE Statement of Principles of Integrated Education makes specific reference to 'social background'. The declaration of ethos states that **'The promotion of equality and good relations extends to everyone in the school and to their families regardless of their religious, cultural or social background.'**

Shared Education also makes reference to this important division in our society in defining Shared Education as the education together of those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not (for more information about shared education, see the section at the back of this publication).

'Whilst there's the really visible gap between orange and green, the more fundamental and more important gap is the gap between rich and poor and the bubbles of society that we live in.' Andrew McCracken, CEO of Community Foundation for Northern Ireland. Read the full article on **sluggerotoole.com**[113]

Classism

Does the education system in Northern Ireland perpetuate class division or act as a vehicle of cohesion?

What messages did you learn growing up about the comparative value of working as a labourer or a care assistant in comparison to working as a solicitor or a teacher? (Goal 3 – Justice).

A group of P2 children are selecting pictures from a magazine about families. The teacher notices that children more often select images which have signs of wealth such as flashy cars, clothes, jewellery rather than images of families in smaller rooms, on buses, with casual clothing. The teacher asks why they have chosen those images and is surprised that the answer is because they 'look happy', since all the images are of smiling people.

Adapted from Derman-Sparks, Edwards and Goins, (2020. p140).

'Seven Up' is a series of documentaries, filmed every 7 years and made by the same film maker, Michael Apted. It started in 1964 and follows the lives and outcomes of British children from a variety of social class and backgrounds. The latest film was made in 2019, when participants were 63. You can watch it on YouTube or Amazon Prime.

Some Integrated post-primary schools have recently introduced a 'grammar stream', where academic performance is used as an admissions tool. These places have proved to be popular with families. Do you think this is a good idea?

What representations of class are there in your school? (Goal 2 – Diversity).

8. Learning about Ageism

The term 'ageism' was first used in 1969 by gerontologist Robert Butler who founded the National Institute on Ageing in America around the same time. Initially, ageism described negative discrimination against older people. There is now wider recognition that ageism impacts people of all ages and that it is often those who are at the 'bookends' of life that experience ageism most acutely: young and old.

Maggie Kuhn founded the 'Gray Panthers' in 1970 when she was forced to retire at the age of 65. In 2020, **Gray Panthers NYC**[114] states that the movement is 'committed to combating ageism and achieving social justice through intergenerational collaboration and activism.'

Older people

We are living in an era of unprecedented global human longevity. In the last 200 years, life expectancy in the United Kingdom has doubled from 40 to around 80 and is increasing year-on-year. The main reasons for this are technological advances in health, housing and standards of living and a reduction of infant mortality, which pushes the average age of the lifespan up. There have always been older people in society but until relatively

"SPEAK YOUR MIND EVEN IF YOUR VOICE SHAKES"
– MAGGIE KUHN

recently, the lives of older people were viewed as being inextricably linked with frailty, dependence and social and economic inactivity. The concept of 'retirement' is a little over 100 years old.

Of more significance is that the traditional shape of the population pyramid (with more younger people than older) is changing. Although the population of Ireland has a larger number of people aged in their 30's and 40's than the UK, both countries expect to experience continuing rapid growth in the numbers of older people and reduction in the numbers of children in the coming decades. This gradual inversion of the population pyramid has huge implications for social and economic systems.

Part of the solution requires us to stop viewing older people as redundant recipients of services and begin to recognise the huge resource that having a longer, healthier life represents. This includes wealth transfer, childcare, volunteering and continuing to make significant economic and social impacts. In the last few decades, we have begun to recognise these immense contributions that older people make inside and outside families.

Younger people

The concept of 'childhood' as a distinct phase of life is a relatively recent phenomenon which emerged around 200 years ago. Since then the lives of children have changed dramatically and continue to do so. It is well within living memory that children were 'seen and not heard' and that corporal punishment was the norm in schools. The rising global recognition through the adoption of the **United Nations Convention**[115] on the Rights of Child and other social, cultural and political movements through the latter part of the twentieth century means that children's rights are universally acknowledged, although not always facilitated.

Within the school environment, the balance of power between adults and children can be challenging if it is not thought through thoroughly. As well as twisting your tongue, the issues involve adopting a balanced position where on the one hand, children and young people are respected as being sentient humans with opinions and rights and on

the other, they are protected and guided appropriately as they negotiate growing up.

This balance is one that challenges everyone who has a close relationship with any child or young person. The same principles apply here as in previous discussions: talk openly about your conundrum, seek advice from young people about how they want to be treated, don't attempt to do everything on your own; recognise your bias and reflect on it with others.

Tackling ageism

Age is one of the nine characteristics protected by equality legislation in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998). We also have legislation against age discrimination in the workplace and a commitment to pass legislation to tackle ageism in the provision of goods and services. In 2020, **Judge Desmond Marrinan**[116] made a recommendation to include age and gender as categories of hate crime.

In 2014, Belfast was the first place in Northern Ireland to join the World Health Organisation's Global Network of **Age-Friendly Cities and Communities**[117]. Since then, all local government districts in Northern Ireland have signed up. This means they have committed to produce annual action plans about how they will work to:

• combat ageism;
• enable autonomy and;
• support healthy ageing in all policies and at all levels.

Age-Friendly Ireland[118] coordinates activities in the south of Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland also work to eliminate age discrimination.

Bringing generations together can be a powerful way to tackle stereotyping about young and old and to release some of the resources that generations have to offer each other. **Intergenerational practice**[119] aims to

bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which tackle ageism, promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities. It is inclusive and builds on the positive resources that young and old have to offer each other and those around them.

The Intergenerational Mentoring Network[120], based in Glasgow was developed to enable older volunteers to provide additional nurturing and educational support for children and young people in school. The project is based in the University of Strathclyde which has **published research**[121] suggesting it has a part to play in tackling educational underachievement.

> *Ageing begins with the moment of birth, and it ends only when life itself has ended. Life is a continuum; only, we -- in our stupidity and blindness -- have chopped it up into little pieces and kept all those little pieces separate."*
>
> **Maggie Kuhn – Activist**

Things to think about and do

Ageism

> Talk to the young people in your school about ageism and give them an opportunity to express their own experiences of ageism.

Do some research about the Age-Friendly movement and find out if your school can get involved with activities, which are coordinated in Northern Ireland by local councils.

If your school has a connection with a local group of older people, what can you do to make the interaction reciprocal? If it involves a group of children singing to a group of care home residents, what messages does this convey to children about older people?

Watch 'Old School with the Hairy Bikers'. The three programmes were broadcast on BBC2 in 2016 and are available on YouTube. The series tracks a mentoring project where older people were paired with younger people who volunteered for this form of additional support. The **Open University**[122] has some interviews and resources relating to the series. Could your school facilitate this?

> What opportunities are there for older people to volunteer in school? Could you start to develop these?

Time to Read[124] is a project run by Business in the Community which facilitates adults to volunteer to read in primary schools.

Ask your class to create images of a 'typical' old person (or pensioner) and a 'typical' young person (or teenager) and use these to discuss stereotyping. Children often have very negative views of teenagers, even if they are teenagers themselves and this can be a great way to talk about how we continue to attribute negativity to groups we belong to when the prevailing social messages are so strong (Goals 1, 2, 3 and 4 – Identity, Diversity, Justice and Activism).

The Age-Friendly[123] School project may give you some ideas about how your school can connect better with older people (Goal 4 - Activism).

Linking Generations Northern Ireland[125] support intergenerational practice across Northern Ireland and have small grants available to support schools and other organisations to make closer intergenerational connections. They coordinate network groups which support and facilitate intergenerational activity between businesses, schools, older people's groups and so on.

Next Steps

Thank you for your interest in Anti-Bias in Education.

We hope that browsing this publication will be the start of your journey of self-reflection and life-long activism. If so, you will be joining us in our intention to disrupt systems of bias, privilege and power that divide us and destroy so many of our fellow human being's lives.

By connecting with your own experiences of powerlessness and privilege, you can make a precious and powerful individual contribution to building peace and reconciliation in our society. We are stronger together, so if you can identify fellow educators and develop a collective drive within your school community, you might just change the world – or maybe someone else's!

We hope that you will continue to develop your skills and confidence to be an upstander more often than a bystander in the face of injustice and bias.

If you are interested in learning more about Integrated Education and/or about NICIE's Anti-Bias courses, please visit our website or give us a call.

Did you know that any school (apart from hospital and special schools) in Northern Ireland can be an Integrated school? The legal process of changing to become an Integrated school is called 'transformation' and you can find out all about it in the Department of Education's guide **'Integration Works – Transforming your School'**[126].

If you want your school to consider becoming an Integrated school, you can join the campaign at **www.integratemyschool.com**

integrate my School.com

Successive governments in Northern Ireland have recognised that bringing Protestant and Catholic communities together through educational initiatives may be of help in building peace and reconciliation. A history of such initiatives is outlined by **Richardson (2019)**[127] as he reflects on the 'five decade journey' of programmes designed to improve cross-community awareness and understanding through education.

It is important to remember that passionate educationalists, parents, youth workers, voluntary organisations and others brought young people (and sometimes adults) together through the 1970s and 1980s but it was not until the late 1980s that such endeavours were given tentative support from government.

The drivers of cross-community relations in and across schools in Northern Ireland include:

In 1981 Lagan College opened, Northern Ireland's first **Integrated school**.

DE Circular 1982/21: **'The Improvement of Community Relations: The Contribution of Schools'** stated that, 'every teacher, every school manager, Board member and trustee, and every educational administrator within the system, has a responsibility to help children and young people to learn to understand and respect each other, and their differing customs and traditions, and to prepare them to live together in harmony in adult life.'

The **'Cross-Community Contact Scheme'** in 1987 enabled schools to bring children/young people together.

In 1989 the themes of **'Education for Mutual Understanding'** (EMU) and 'Cultural Heritage' were introduced to the formal school curriculum as part of the Education Reform Order (1989).

The **Belfast Agreement** spawned the Northern Ireland Act (1998). Section 75 requires public authorities to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity between: persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, men and women generally, persons with a disability and persons without and persons with dependants and persons without.

The Northern Ireland Curriculum (revised in 2007)[128] established the Areas of Learning of Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (**PDMU**) in primary schools and Learning for Life and Work (especially Local and Global Citizenship) at Key Stage 3. It emphasised that

these are **whole curriculum** concerns as outlined in the 'Big Picture of the Curriculum' at **Foundation**[129], **Key Stages 1 & 2**[130] / **Key Stage 3**[131] and **Key Stage 4**[132].

In 2011, **The Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy**[133] (CRED) aim was to: 'contribute to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others, promote equality and work to eliminate discrimination, and by providing formal and non-formal education opportunities for them to build relationships with those of different backgrounds and traditions within the resources available.'

Sharing Works: A Policy for Shared Education[134], (DE, 2015) introduced the concept of Shared Education and the **Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2016**[135] means there is legislative provision in relation to **Shared Education**[136].

The Act defines **shared education** as 'the education together of -

(a) those of different religious belief, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons; and

(b) those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not,

which is secured by the working together and co-operation of two or more relevant providers.'

The Act also outlines that 'the purpose of shared education is—

(a) to deliver educational benefits to children and young persons;

(b) to promote the efficient and effective use of resources;

(c) to promote equality of opportunity;

(d) to promote good relations; and

(e) to promote respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion.'

NICIE was part of the team which created the **Shared Education Pupil Pathway**[137], published by CCEA in 2019. The pathway describes *'what Shared Education could look like for learners as they progress through school. It outlines the educational outcomes that contribute to reconciliation through the curriculum at all Key Stages and through the development of children's skills and capabilities, attitudes and dispositions.'* Because of this emphasis in the Pupil Pathway on reconciliation outcomes, it is recommended reading for educators on NICIE's Anti-Bias in Education Programme.

Equality, diversity and reconciliation outcomes are a central theme of Northern Ireland's wider public policy. **Together, Building a United Community, published by the Northern Ireland Executive**[138] in 2013 is the current Community Relations policy for Northern Ireland. It shares a vision of:

"A united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation - one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance."

Similar themes of equality and tackling disadvantage also run through the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government **Outcomes Delivery Plan**[139], published at the end of 2019.

These are just some of the policy drivers which identify education as an area where opportunities exist to bring our two main cultural traditions together for the purpose of building peace.

Whilst the intentions of these policies and accompanying resources are welcomed and recommended by NICIE, a barrier to progress has been recognised in the **evaluation**[140] of the Shared Education Signature Project as a continued reticence of staff in schools to engage with the 'controversial' issues that divide us. The fact that talking about our social identity is described as a controversial issue is telling but not surprising given the segregated experience that many of us have of growing up and/or living in Northern Ireland.

In 2014, CCEA worked with New-Bridge Integrated College and published a case study: **'Developing a whole-school approach to teaching and learning about controversial issues**[141].**'**

The Anti-Bias approach can provide an anchor, a lens and a foundation for work about social identity. It enables us to begin a personal journey to recognise and value our own social identities and those of others, and then to gradually build confidence in applying and achieving each of the four goals of Anti-Bias in Education, (Identity – Diversity – Justice – Activism), ideally within a mixed community classroom setting.

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