### Spoonfuls of Learning: Our Journey in Creating Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive Schools

Dr. Kenna M. Colley Executive Director of Pupil Services, Radford City Schools

WVPEC Hot Topic Conference June 21, 2021

### My groundrules

- I'm here to challenge you and your thinking
- I'm here to tell the truth that <u>I know</u>
- I'm here to make you slightly uncomfortable
- I'm here to make us all think and challenge ourselves
- I'm hoping to push you to continue to "dive in" and learn
- I will try not use my "landscaper language" (sorry!)

#### My beliefs

I come from a sincere place of wanting to promote equality; as a school leader and as a human being

Our society and educational environments are not set up to create equity or equality; we must work hard to achieve this together every day

We need to ground our schools in a simple, student-centered mission....."all means all"......ALWAYS!

#### Biases are not pretty....

Biases are part of the make up of who

we are. Own them, be uncomfortable

with them and work everyday to learn

about them and overcome them.



#### Bias: We are not as open-minded as we think.

- What we have today isn't the best way of doing things
- Our biological hardware does not always set us up for success: the quickest way to define implicit bias is to say it is the thumbprint of our culture on your brain.
- We associate more negative words than positive about disability, race, gender and what we perceive as "difference".
- Bias isn't about "who is good and who is bad"...it requires active choice, curiosity and exploration.

# A family like ours











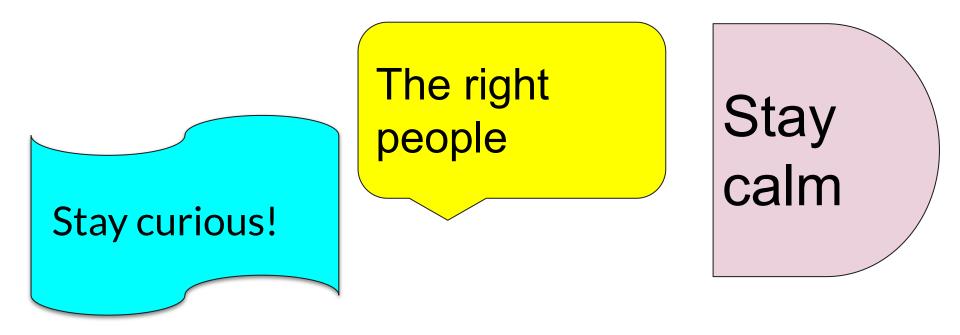


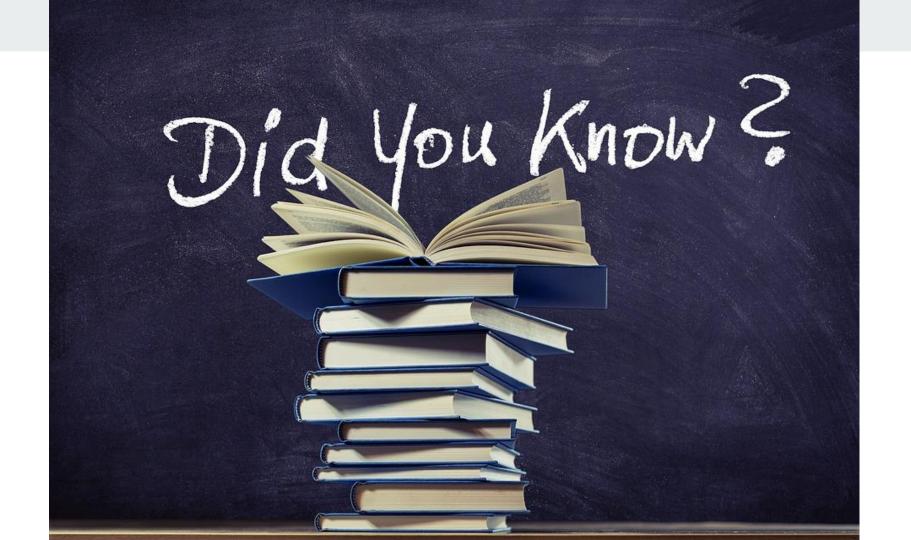






#### -We are not as open-minded as we think.





Perhaps the most important thing I've learned is that we all need and crave human relationships. Yet we will only build relationships if we are willing to be honest with ourselves, learn to see people for who they are and not the "categories" we place them in, and practice, practice, practice open-mindedness.

Christopher Freeze, 2021

## Support vulnerable and systematically neglected populations

Students living in poverty, students with disabilities, students learning English, students experiencing homelessness, students in the foster care system, students who are incarcerated, undocumented students, students who are Black and Brown, Native American, Asian, Middle Eastern, trans students and students who identify as LGBTQ+, etc., etc., etc.

# The intersectionality of discrimination and harassment

#### It's not about us.....as school leaders

Having a mission that focuses teachers and administrators on meeting the needs of all students can go miles in promoting a positive school culture and helping adults prioritize the needs of their students over their own needs.



### Terminology...



BIPOCMixed raceBinaryBiracialGender fluidMixedTransPerson of colorQueerBlackLGBTQ+BrownAfrican American

Language changes. Some of the terms now in common usage are different from those used in the past to describe similar ideas, identities and experiences. Some people may continue to use terms that are less commonly used now to describe themselves, and some people may use different terms entirely. What's important is recognizing and respecting people as individuals.



## Schools bar Native students from wearing traditional regalia at graduation

### Phrases or ideas that work for me....

- I don't have enough clear understanding of.....
- I'm curious about.....
- Move away from the deserving vs. the undeserving paradigm
- Compassion is a human right
- Confronting ourselves in the mirror
- I don't understand how people go out of their way to involve themselves in others lives when it is none of their business
- The "weaponization" of language (failure, at-risk, "below average")
- Try to validate the person is who is feeling aggrieved
- Is this equitable?

- Move to "appreciating" diversity
- Creating empathy
- Social-emotional learning....PK-12!!!
- Diversity Dialogues
- Hear the student voice



# Critical Race Theory: the current "madness" in our country

"Happy Juneteenth! The first U.S. holiday that's illegal to teach about in 15 states" (Trevor Noah)

Developed by scholars in the 1970's, it states that racism is woven into our society, laws and policies and goes beyond anyone's personal beliefs, actions or prejudices. It is woven into healthcare, education, housing, politics and all of society. It doesn't ask anyone to treat someone differently because of the color of their skin. It explains why some people are treated differently because of the color of their skin or their race.



#### **Critical Race Theory**

- Instead of trying to forget, we must work hard to remember.
- "A selective and distorted history".....we deserve better
- People get very upset when you want to tell a little truth (or the whole truth).
- Please don't tell people to "heal" from something you've never been through.

# Social Emotional Learning and Diversity and Inclusion Standards

How will we include these standards and their practice into our classrooms?

What intentional actions will we embed into our schools and classrooms every day? (e.g. Purposeful Practices)

Do we use Response to Intervention as a tool and place to develop

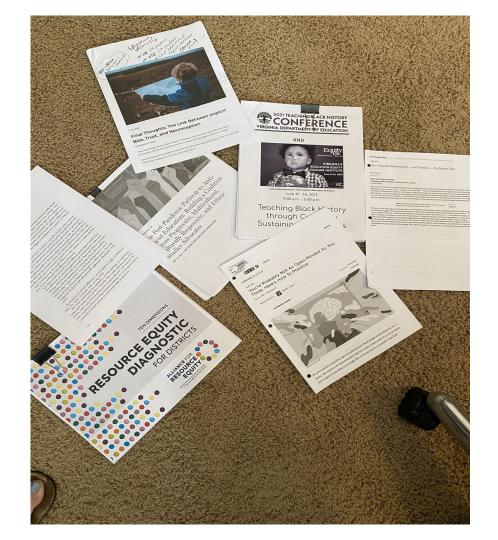
supports for students?

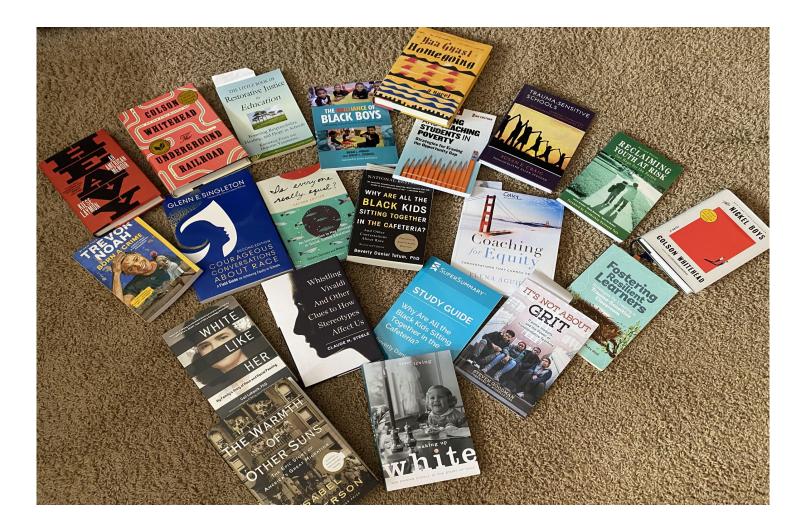
Read, read, read!

Participate in exercises......



-----





### Stick to the script

- Stick with your mission: We will work together to educate and support all of our children and youth. All means all!
- Be bold in our interventions.
- Challenge status quo when issues are deep seated in <u>lies</u> or <u>miseducation</u>.
- Cultivating the genius of all students. Strength based vs deficit based.
- Deficit narratives rob people of their dignity and their opportunity. Change the narrative!

