Language Matters

Topic Overview Video (link) 📹

Why:

People naturally bring their own experiences and understandings to language. Lack of common understanding leads to confusion and lack of progress. Also, without intentionally considering the words we use, implicit bias can negatively impact communication with colleagues, families, and the community. Additionally, linguistic prejudice adds layers of our own personal beliefs about words, accents, and even the pitch of the voice.

Instructional Implications:

- ⊘ **Improve** fidelity of communication within and across groups of individuals
- ⊘ **Reduced linguistic prejudice** yields reduced implicit bias against groups of individuals
- ⊘ **Reduced implicit and explicit gender bias** for increased culturally-responsive communication leads to increased self-esteem, self-efficacy, and growth

Guiding Questions:

- Does your district currently have a glossary of shared terms?
- What words are found often in our professional discussions? (ie. enrichment, intervention, strategy, nomination, congratulations, program, etc…)
- In what areas are there differences in definitions? (campus-to-campus, central-to-campus, department-to-department, etc…)
- What terms are most often misunderstood? What are the instructional and cultural implications of those misunderstandings?
- Do we have an equity policy that addresses implicit bias, explicit bias, and/or linguistic prejudice?
- What are common linguistic biases that may exist in your district (ie. accents, grammatical structures)? What might we negatively associate with these linguistic features (ie. lower intelligence, honesty, work ethic, motivation, education, attractiveness)?
- What educator groups might feel the impacts of language biases?
- What departments or which individuals need to be involved in the creation or editing of a common glossary?
- Is there a designated time in the year to address documents such as a glossary or can it be done at any time?
- Who needs to approve the creation of the glossary and/or language expectations?

1

Create a glossary for the district to use across campuses, offices, and departments

2

Explicitly identify language that creates barriers along with replacement words and phrases

3

Address linguistic prejudice assumptions through awareness sessions or bite-sized professional learning

Resources:

Council for Exceptional Children. (2006). NAGC - CEC teacher knowledge & skill standards for Gifted and Talented Education. *National Association for Gifted Children.* https://cdn.ymaws.com/nagc.org/resource/resmgr/knowledge-center/NACG-CEC_Teacher_Knowledge_a.pdf **(focus on Standard 10)**

Yale Grammatical Diversity Project. (2010). Linguistic Prejudice: Revealing our implicit biases about language. *Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning.* https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/sites/default/files/basic-page-supplementary-materials-files/ctl_presentation_revision_updated_ctl_feb_7_media.\pdf

Language Matters Worksheet

1

Does your district have a glossary of shared terms?

2

What words are found in our professional discussions?

3

Where are there differences/misunderstandings in definitions?
What are the instructional and cultural implications of those misunderstandings?

Campus-to-campus

Central office-to-campus

Department-to-department

Other

4

How can we build a glossary of shared terms?

Which departments or individuals need to be involved in building the new glossary?

Which terms should we include in the glossary?

What is our shared definition of each term?

What is the rationale for including this term in the glossary?

5

Think about your rollout plan.

How do we get approval for the new glossary?

How do we communicate the new glossary to other departments in the district? Other campuses? Teachers?

What documents need to be updated to reflect the new glossary?