UNDERSTANDING MICROAGGRESSIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

“Microaggressions” is a term that has recently been applied to the discussion of racial prejudice and specifically refers to the statements or actions that are subtle or indirect examples of a racial prejudice or bias. Microaggressions are seen throughout society in common interactions and communications which are often so normalized that they can appear as acceptable behavior. Students of color are often the victim of microaggressions in school as they are assumed to be lower status resulting in poverty city schools. These statistics are important to understanding the impact that microaggressions have on students of color.

Microaggressions are defined by Hammond (2014) as “those small seemingly innocuous brief verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities that send hostile, derogatory, denigrating, and hurtful messages to people of color”. Microaggressions are often so normalized that they are assumed to be normal behavior, and as a result, they may go unchallenged.

TYPES OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Microaggressions are specifically referred to as the statements or actions that are not necessarily intended as racist, but do have a racially biased component. They are defined by Hammond (2014) as “those small seemingly innocuous brief verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities that send hostile, derogatory, denigrating, and hurtful messages to people of color”.

Microaggressions can be divided into several types, including:

- Microassaults – The misuse of power and privilege against students of color
- Microcoerce – To demean a person’s racial and cultural heritage
- Microinvalidations – To exclude a person’s thoughts, feelings, and experiences

ACADEMIC TRACKING AND SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Academic tracking refers to the different pathways through school and are often connected to gifted and special education programs. Schools often place students of color in special education programs because of the environment, and the academic tracking they face within the programs. Students of color are more likely to have a fixed mindset because of microaggressions they face within the programs.

Students of color feel more pressured to conform to the majority classroom identity and if they refuse to do so, they are more likely to have their culture disrespected through microinvalidations.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) refers to “an engagement strategy designed to motivate racially and culturally diverse students”.

- Address Personal Biases and Prejudices
- Get to know students personally.
- Use real life and current event examples within the classroom.
- Promoting respect and embracing student differences
- Recognize bias within the system

CRT helps eliminate the numerous amounts of microaggressions that appear within public secondary schools.