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In Fall 2017, *Afterschool Matters* published an article by Jennifer Siaca Curry titled, “Equity and Inclusion: An Action Agenda for Youth Development Professionals”. The article highlights six evidence-based strategies out-of-school time (OST) professionals can employ to “fight discrimination and help youth value their own and others identities.” In this section, I offer a brief summary.

Six Strategies OST professionals can use to design programs with an antidiscrimination framework:

1) Build a personal understanding of the history of oppression in the US

To be part of the solution, OST professionals must know how institutional policies and practices have marginalized individuals and groups throughout history. It is our responsibility to educate ourselves, so we can eliminate harmful practices in our own programs and work to dismantle larger systems of oppression.

2) Adjust language to ensure inclusivity

OST professionals must strive to use language that is inclusive and promotes equity. Rather than taking a “color-blind” approach (i.e. “I don’t see color” or “I treat everyone the same”), try to enact a philosophy of multiculturalism by recognizing individual identities in a way that is accurate, respectful and promotes a positive sense of self. For more information, check out the *Social Justice Phrase Guide* included in the Opportunity Agenda, 2015.

<https://opportunityagenda.org/explore/resources-publications/social-justice-phrase-guide>

3) Work to eliminate implicit bias

We all have biases. This means we all hold ideas, attitudes, preferences that shape how we perceive, experience and act on the world. Implicit biases are “cognitive shortcuts” used by our brains to process information quickly and can more accurately predict our actions than our professed values. This is why we must work to identify our negative biases; only then can we think critically about why they exist and how they affect our practice with youth and families.

4) Use culturally responsive pedagogy

Youth learn best when their identities, cultures and languages are reflected in the curriculum. Culturally responsive OST programs provide opportunities for participants to engage with texts and activities that draw on strengths from their own cultures to teach them about themselves and the world.

5) Address identity-based bullying

Threats, insults, and physical aggression perpetrated on someone because of their appearance, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or religion are all examples of identity-based bullying. Developing norms and practices in OST settings to address these behaviors (amongst youth and staff) increases physical and emotional safety, which are essential for achieving a quality afterschool program.

6) Recruit and develop staff who build and maintain a positive environment for all

OST programs are shaped by staff. Therefore, it is essential to hire staff who are willing to engage in critical self-reflection and who are committed to eliminating discrimination. Organizations must move beyond discussions about equity to taking action. For example, offer professional development that prepares OST professionals to address discriminatory behaviors and design performance reviews that hold staff accountable to inclusive practices.

What strategies will you use to promote equity and inclusion in your out-of-school time program?

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<https://www.niost.org/Afterschool-Matters/afterschool-matters-journal>

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