

# INNOCENT

Classroom

## Nurturing and Committing

Stay connected with us:



[innocentclassroom.com](http://innocentclassroom.com)

# Today's session:

- Reflect on what we have learned on our individual confidence in utilizing the practice
- Understand and identify how the things we have learned can align and apply to our goals, roles, and spaces.
- Create and commit to clear ways of integrating the learning in ways specific to our person, roles, and systems - ensuring innocence is prioritized for children.

# When do you feel most Innocent?

- **Innocence** - the condition that results from the reduction, minimization, neutralization, or elimination of the guilt that develops from stereotypes, popular negative narratives and iconography.
- **In other words**, when do you feel most like you can just be. Exist unaware and unaffected by the negative stereotypes that you know exist about you.

# Innocent Classroom Commitment

Every child deserves to feel Innocent – to be free of the negative influence and impact of stereotypes and stereotyped expectations – in the time they are with you in your school.

# Building a Practice

*Learning, trying, and developing shared language and practical strategies for building relationships that protect and nurture the innocence of children.*

- Focus on individual children: we must “build the muscle” in order to ensure we have a practice in place for every child.
- Observation: Getting to know a child in ways that help you see their epistemology. Behavior must be disconnected from the narrative of our children.
- Understand and accept their reality: Develop new skills in understanding a child’s epistemology of their relationship with us, with school.
- Discerning a Child’s Good: Establish a practice of starting where our children are at, their Good, in our understanding and responses to them.
- Collaboration: Open ourselves up to the perspective, expertise, and ideas of colleagues to find to most impactful approach and strategies for a child.
- Building through Engagement: Intentionally build our practice through the strategies we create for individual children, focusing on their Good. Work through the Process with intention to develop our practice and our relationships with children to create opportunity for innocence. Our children don’t have to wait while we build our consistency and intentionality.



# Skill reflections for IC Practitioners

*Innocent Classroom Practitioners can be observed demonstrating the following skills (examples):*

- Can quickly work past their own and/or others reliance on behavior as the core narrative of a child and center the practice on Good and innocence
- Can explain the relationship-building methodology and the way it leads to improved outcomes for children
- Moves beyond what comes “naturally” in their relationship building approach to center the individual child through a new practice
- Willingness and ability to “slow down” and work through the Process of Discovering and Engaging the Good of an individual child
- Demonstrates skill in helping others work through the Process of Discovering and Engaging the Good of an individual child
- Clearly aligns their Innocent Classroom practice to their own and their school’s priorities and goals
- Models the practice with fidelity for their educators in both practice, conversation, and leadership (admin.)

# Practice Reflection:

- Where are you at in the development of your practice with individual children?
- What parts of the practice have seemed most clear/easiest to develop?
- What parts of the practice have been less clear/been more challenging to develop?
- Where do you still have questions about what it means to be an Innocent Classroom Practitioner?
- What do you need in your practice?

# Centering Innocence:

Creating Patterns that Prioritize Innocence



# Innocent Classroom – Building to Impact

**The Challenge**  
Existence, persistence, and pervasiveness of negative narratives about race

**Impact of this Challenge**  
Creates the primary barriers for Black, brown, and indigenous children in achieving at the highest levels in our education system – the barrier that goes unacknowledged and unaddressed

**Our Approach**  
An educator-focused, relationship-based approach educators developing the language, tools, and practice to create conditions where the impact of the narrative is revealed, reduced, and, ultimately, eliminated

**School-based Effort**

- Individual educators developing a deep understanding of the challenge in a new way
- Individual educators developing their practice through relationships with individual children
- Educator teams developing a collaborative approach to using the practice
- Sites developing their own toolboxes and ways of measuring impact

**What is Built**  
The absence (neutralization) of the negative narratives results in a school where all efforts can have their intended impact: teaching, learning, CRP, SEL, etc.  
  
(or we can identify what isn't working and why)

**Sustainable Impact**  
Creates the consistent, sustainable conditions for Black, brown, and indigenous children (and all children) to experience education in a way that they can believe, engage, and learn

**Measuring Change**  
Educator-driven changes in Patterns that become integrated as a part of the school

- Thinking
- Individual Practice
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Application

# Constructing an Innocent Classroom School/District

*For us to come true on our promise  
to children, it must come from the  
development of new patterns  
involved in creating meaningful,  
lasting change*



Patterns of Thinking



Patterns of Individual Practice



Patterns of Collaboration



Patterns of Leadership



Patterns of Application

**Patterns of Thinking** are unconscious thought patterns that influence perceptions of reality, adult behavior and ways of being. In American society these patterns are often influenced by implicit racial bias.

What it “looks like” when Patterns of Thinking center innocence:

- We move away from “blaming” outside factors in our work with children
- We believe in our individual and collective human power to do and be better in our spaces
- We check ourselves and do not allow any part of the narrative of guilt to inform our true understanding of a child
- We don’t walk away from any child or lean on someone else’s “natural instinct”

**Patterns of Individual Practice** consider our habits of behavior, including traditional ways of responding to children.

What it “looks like” when Patterns of Individual Practice center innocence:

- We all demonstrate effort in building innocent relationships with every child
- We are intentional and self-aware of how our interactions may hold a narrative of guilt, for myself or for the child
- We share about children by always starting with their Good
- We are willing to use the shared language and practice intentionally to ensure the best possible outcome for children
- We intentionally work the practice and incorporate ways to measure effort and progress in our daily roles

**Patterns of Collaboration** consider how educators work together to intentionally plan and transform their school into one that prioritizes individual children and their innocence.

What it “looks like” when Patterns of Collaboration center innocence:

- Active, collective responsibility for the relationships a child has with every educator, throughout the space
- Willingness to share with and learn from one another towards collaborative support of children
- Shared “accountability” and support for one another in ensuring guilt isn’t creeping into our spaces (language, strategies, etc.)
- Awareness of our own and one another’s Goods in our work together

**Patterns of Leadership** challenge leaders to construct schools that center the experience of innocence for each child.

What it “looks like” when Patterns of Leadership center innocence:

- Everyone can clearly articulate the relationship of Innocent Classroom with other school efforts and priorities.
- Collaboration between leadership and staff to create pathways for consistent practice
- Ability of leaders to observe and identify school-wide patterns that may get in the way of a practice of innocence
- Skill in applying the practice in all relationships (colleagues, community, families, etc.)

**Patterns of Application** consider formal and informal policies, practices procedures that need reconsideration to complete school transformation.

What it “looks like” when Patterns of Application center innocence:

- Standardized responses to individual children include the Practice of Engaging Good and center innocence (behavior plans, IEPs, student support meetings, etc.)
- School-wide efforts are understood as in partnership and integrated with Innocent Classroom
- Hiring new staff, and staff evaluations, include an “assessment” of relationship beliefs and practice
- Anywhere we are documenting the “story” of a child, it is clear where we are in our Practice of Discovering and Engaging their Good

# Discussion

- What are your current goals as relates equity and/or relationships?
- What opportunities do you see in how this practice and approach could support your goals?
- What challenges or barriers do you see in how this practice and approach might “fit” with your goals?
- What other questions/thoughts do you have in relation how this practice relates to your role/school?





Imagine that we can liberate all children and our spaces from negative narratives, stereotypes, and low expectations.



Imagine them as free, if only for the time they are with you. Free of the negative ideas and expectations they know exist around them about them.



Imagine that this is just the beginning.

# Pledge of Innocence

I pledge, as an educator of children of diverse backgrounds, races, genders, sexualities, abilities, and beliefs, that I will strive to know each child separate and apart from the stereotypes that contextualize their existence.

I pledge, upon the discovery of their Good, to engage with them in such a way that their Good is nourished and they are capable of showing up as innocent in my space

