



# USING NARRATIVE TO HELP GRADE 6 BOYS UNDERSTAND IMPLICIT BIAS AND DEVELOP EMPATHY TOWARDS OTHERS

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## Further Information

This poster and further information is available at <http://www.theibsc.org/>

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## Introduction

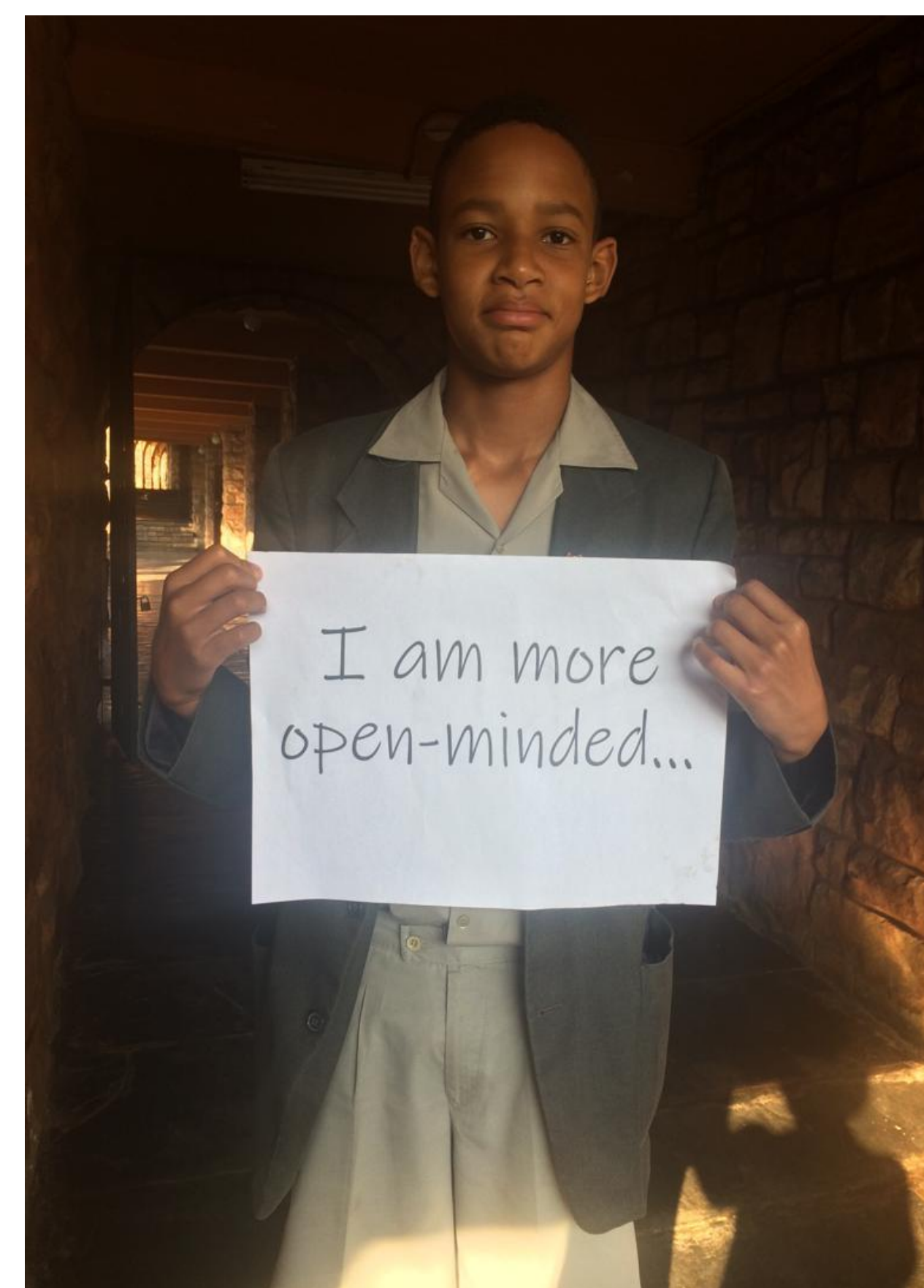
There is an increased need to teach South African boys **explicitly** about **character** and **bias** as this is not always taught **implicitly** at home due to factors such as political instability, the threat to personal security and growing safety concerns, the weakening of household financial positions, and the increase in single-parent households.

These factors put substantial pressure on both affluent and poor families, resulting in parents struggling to meet the demands of everyday life. As a result, they spend less quality time with their children and the onus of bringing up better citizens rests increasingly on the **education system**, particularly on educators.

This action research project aims to foster an understanding of the term **implicit bias** whilst demonstrating how boys can develop a sense of empathy to better understand other people.

## The Research Question

*How can the use of narrative help Grade 6 boys understand implicit bias and develop empathy towards others?*

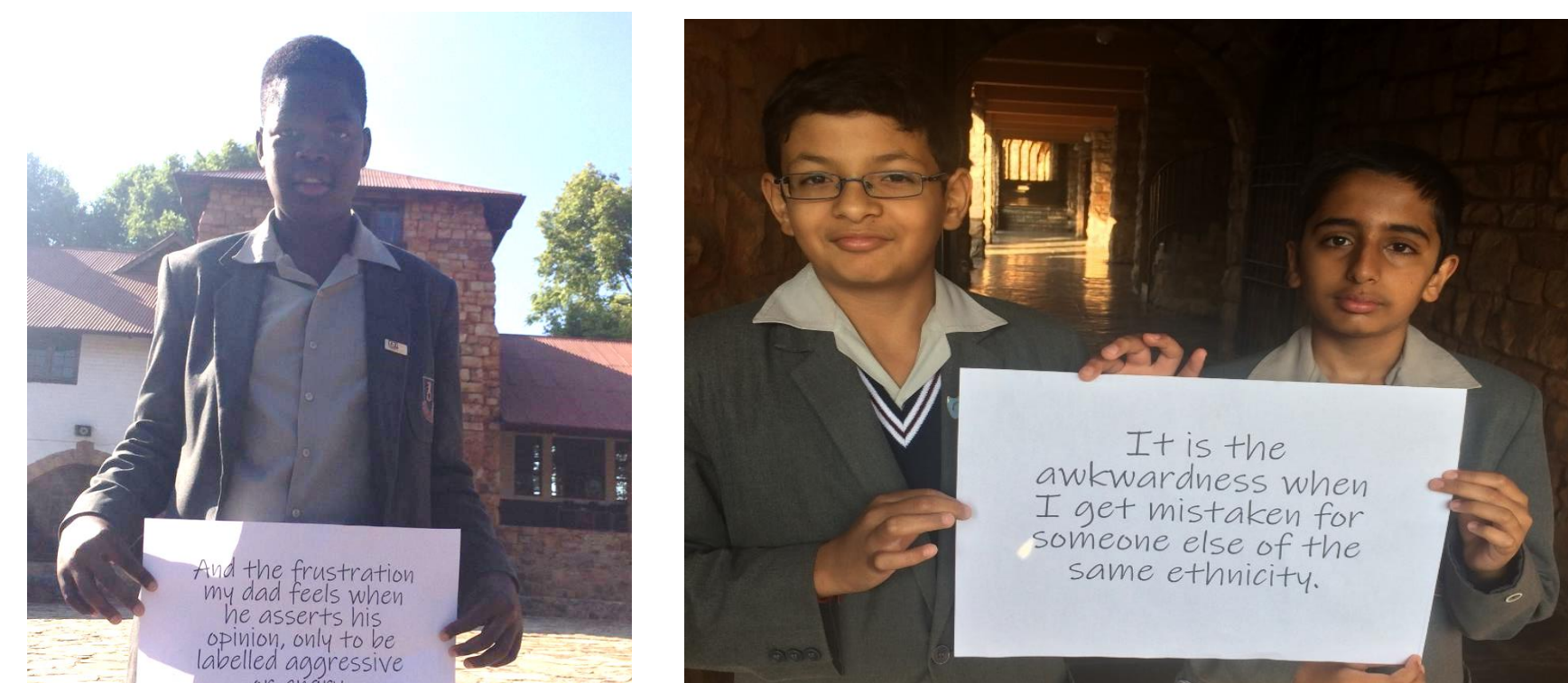
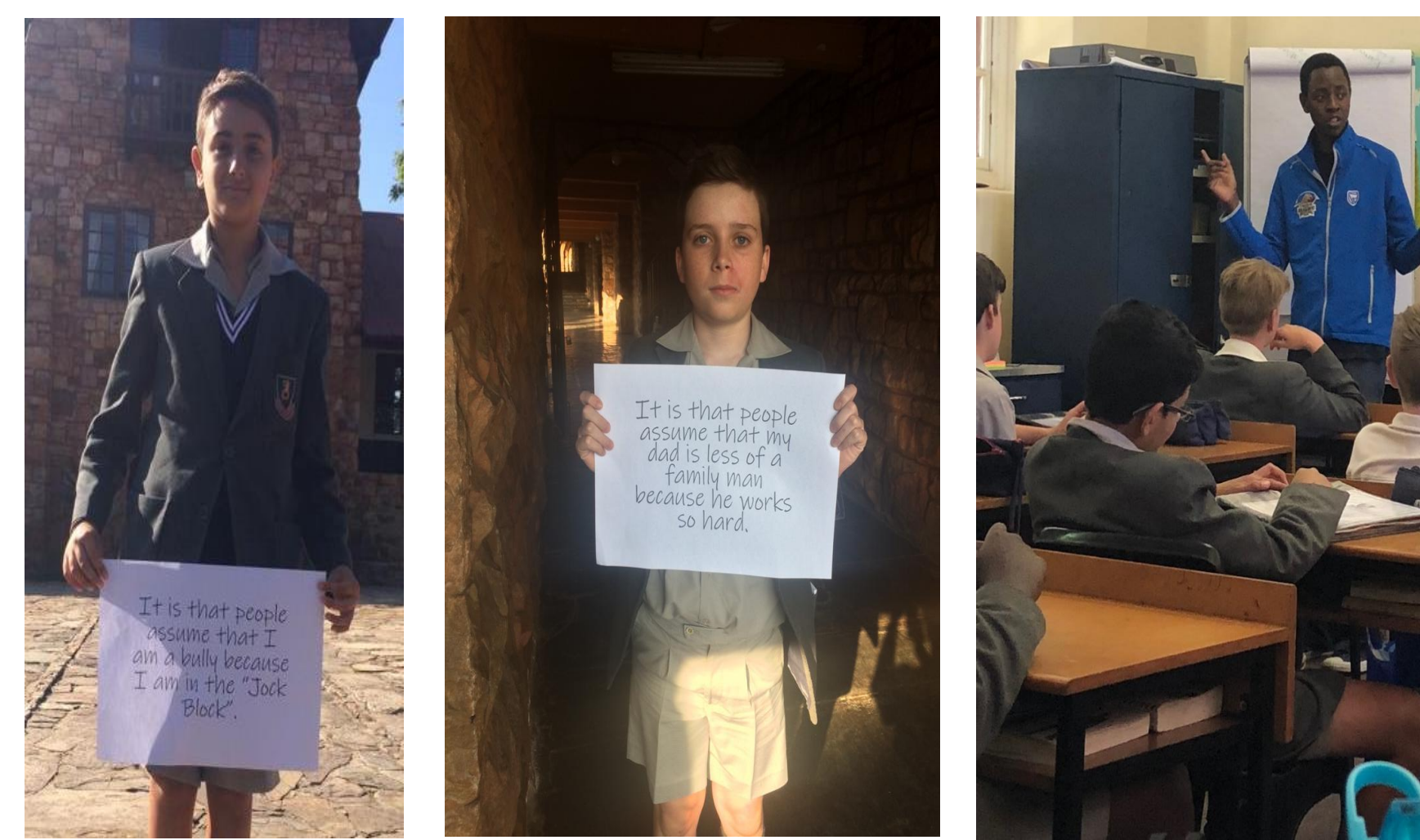


## Research Context and Participants

Worldwide, heightened tensions around diversity advocate that the youth of today need to be **actively taught** about **diversity** and **implicit biases**.

The participants of the Action Research project were a form class consisting of 25 Grade 6 boys.

These boys were selected because of the amount of time they had spent with their form teacher and the close relationship they had established with her.



## Data Collection and Analysis

The data collected were both **qualitative** and **quantitative** and were derived from:

- Flipgrid interviews;
- Student surveys, including an empathy questionnaire and the Harvard Project Implicit Bias survey;
- Student journals, in which they reflected on the activities covered during the action research process and provided evidence of visible thinking;
- Class discussions and feedback from case studies;
- Researcher's field notes;
- Participants' work samples, including the final product of a *Philosophy for Children* storybook;
- Questionnaires;
- Photographs and videos.

**Inductive analysis** was used to narrow down the information collected. Interviews were transcribed and common themes identified. The patterns and themes that emerged from the inductive analysis were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet, which was then used to code and categorise the responses of the learners and the different data collection methods. Each category was noted as it appeared and coded accordingly. Connections were made between the coded data and the research question. The process was further filtered to identify **three main themes**, which emerged by interpreting the simplified data. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data allowed for the application of Mertler's (2017) polyangulation method. This approach combines results from various data sources, enabling each source to be corroborated and thus increasing its validity.

## Key Findings and Discussion

- Storytelling is an effective teaching tool to pique and maintain Grade 6 boys' interest whilst eliciting constructive discussion

*'Wow! Are these real life-stories? This is cool!'*

*'This is hectic. I've never thought about it like that!'*

- A deeper understanding of the term implicit bias (and by association, bias)

*'I feel happy that I'm learning about this and that everyone has it and it's good that we're talking about it. It helps us understand each other better. It hasn't changed me but I'm thinking twice before I make judgements on others.'*

*'I've started to recognise that my parents have unconscious bias - I pick it up.'*

- A heightened sense of empathy

*'I feel I'm beginning to learn about other people's perspectives'*

## Conclusions

Through the use of **narrative**, the Grade 6 boys appear to have been enriched by the project by coming away with a deeper understanding of **implicit bias** and an ability to **better understand** and **demonstrate empathy**. Implications for future practice include the following:

- The **same teacher** needs to be involved in every step of the process and s/he needs to embrace the uncomfortable nature of the process;
- The teacher has to be **adaptable**, as each class is unique and will handle the project differently;
- The teacher must be aware that the topics raised maybe **hurtful** and **embarrassing** to certain groups and individuals;
- The teacher needs to practise **good classroom management** and enforce **sound collaboration** and **communication skills**;
- The process should **not be rushed**.

## The Research Action

1. Pre-interview/Pre-discussion about the term 'implicit bias,' and what was understood by it.

2. Participation in a pre- and post-empathy questionnaire.

3. Exposure to the use of picture books.

4. Sharing real-life stories by way of case studies that tackled stereotypes/biases (used in conjunction with Project Zero: Harvard Visible Thinking routines).

The examination of these existing stories allowed for the boys to interact with the various scenarios by making minor changes to certain variables. These included changing the race and gender of the characters.

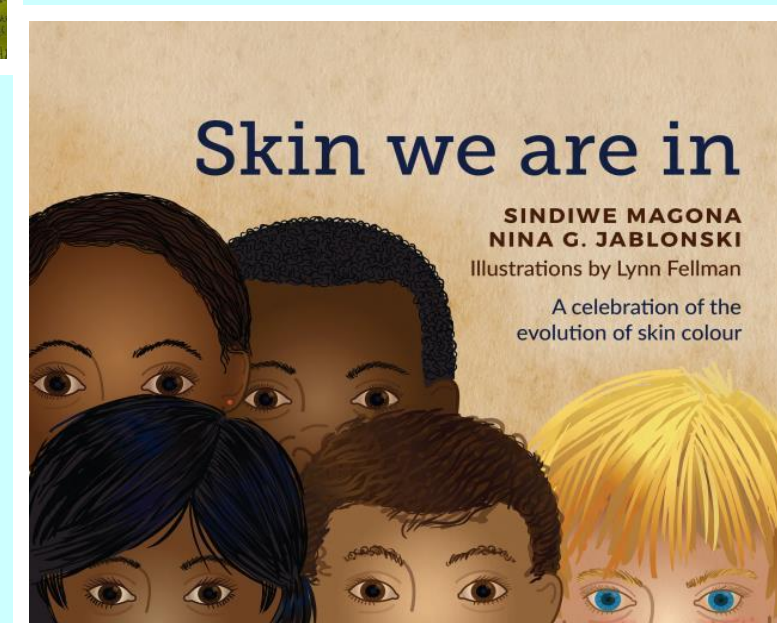
5. Encouraging the boys to share their written personal narratives on the topic through journaling.

## Key Readings

Staats, C. (2016). *Understanding implicit bias: What educators should know*. Center for Civic Innovation, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research. Website: <http://www.manhattan-institute.org> [www.eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1086492](http://www.eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1086492)

*Using picture storybooks to teach character education*. (2001, 07). Choice Reviews Online, 38(11)

Mertler, C. A. (2017). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators*. SAGE Publications



*International Boys' Schools Coalition Action Research Programme 2018 - 2019*  
*Boys and Stories: Pathways to Learning*

