



Implicit Bias Series

PART 3: Countering and Preventing Bias in the Classroom

Experts suggest many strategies for applying debiasing techniques to instructional practice. For more comprehensive lists of strategies, see this [Tanner 2013](#) article on structuring the classroom and/or these University of Michigan [checklists for inclusive teaching principles](#). Adapted from these resources, the following table organizes some of the techniques as applied to classroom climate, course curriculum, and teaching practices, respectively. (For more on this, see our [Inclusive Practice series](#).)

Considerations for Countering Bias and Promoting an Inclusive Classroom Climate

- Examine your personal assumptions of the students' background, prior knowledge, and experience
- Demonstrate high expectations for *all* students with an authentic belief that *all* can succeed
- Learn all students' names and encourage them to address each other by name
- Actively monitor your class for potential stereotype threat and broad generalizations
- Create an environment prioritizing a sense of belonging (e.g., where multiple groups feel "connected")
- Cultivate connections between students, the discipline, and scholarly and professional communities
- Ensure that students have an awareness of and access to campus resources that support their unique identities
- Maintain a classroom free from microaggressions and address microaggressions when they occur
- Facilitate a space where all classroom exchanges are tolerant and respectful (e.g, norm setting)
- Be transparent about instructor and student roles in the classroom, discussions, and activities and communicate them explicitly and consistently throughout the quarter (e.g., during the first day of class, in the syllabus, etc.)
- Acknowledge the unique identities, experiences, strengths, and needs of your students, embracing student diversity as an asset and celebrating the physical and perceived differences (e.g., a safe space where differences are not only respected, but also honored and valued)

Considerations for Countering Bias in the Curriculum

- Acknowledge, respect, and make multiple identities visible and represented in course materials
- Emphasize the range of identities and backgrounds of experts who have contributed to your discipline
- Diversify readings, videos, and visuals so as not to marginalize students through content—powerpoint slides are a great place to include diverse examples
- Be transparent through clear communication of norms, expectations, assignments (see [Tools for Revising/Creating your Own Transparent Assignments](#)), and evaluation criteria (e.g., use of rubrics)
- Present course material using a myriad of modalities for greater student access
- Plan learning activities that connect to students' prior knowledge and clearly communicate the learning objectives

Considerations for Countering Bias via Teaching Practices

- Ensure that you ask students to speak only for themselves, not on behalf of an entire group
- Design learning activities that are more often cooperative, as opposed to competitive
- Intentionally develop group projects where all students have an equal opportunity to participate
- Structure class interactions by providing goals, procedures, and processes to ensure they don't reinforce existing patterns of privilege
- Ask students to identify concrete observations about content (e.g., describe a photo, quote or diagram) before proceeding to analytical questions



Additional Resources

- For more teaching and learning resources from University of Michigan, visit [this site](#)
- For guidelines for discussing incidents of bias from University of Michigan, visit [this site](#)
- For an Inclusive Pedagogy Framework from the Center for Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL), visit [this site](#)

Citation

Center for Educational Effectiveness [CEE]. (2019). Implicit Bias Series. *Just-in-Time Teaching Resources*. Retrieved from <http://cee.ucdavis.edu/JITT>

References

Tanner, K. D. (2013). Structure matters: twenty-one teaching strategies to promote student engagement and cultivate classroom equity, *CBE – Life Sciences Education* 12, 322-331.

University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT). “Principles and Strategies for Inclusive Teaching – Reflection on Your Practice.” Retrieved from <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/multicultural-teaching/inclusive-teaching-strategies>