

## Instructor Bias Assessment

Adapted from “Checking My Equity Systems,” by Enid Lee.

Whenever you enter a “classroom” (traditional or outdoor), ask yourself the following questions to check your assumptions, mitigate your biases, and make sure you’re teaching to all learners.

- Activities & Resources for Instruction**
  - Which participants in terms of gender, culture, immigration status, socioeconomic status can relate to these activities and this material?
  - How can I relate these activities to the experiences, prior knowledge and goals of all the participants?
  - What examples/illustrations can I use to connect the key concepts to participants’ lives?
  
- Nature of Learning Tasks**
  - What do I want participants to learn from these tasks?
  - Have I included a range of tasks to engage the realities of experiences in the room?
  - Is the purpose of the task clear and challenging to all participants?
  - If participants are not on task, what are they doing instead?
  - Is there a pattern in terms of gender, culture, language background, race, seating arrangements, status in the classroom among those who are on-task and those who are not?
  
- Participant Talk**
  - Which participants are talking while I am teaching?
  - Is there a pattern among those who are talking and among those who appear to be listening? (such as, proximity to me, their relationship to the topic I am teaching about, etc.)
  - What are these participants talking about?
  - Do I incorporate participant talk into my teaching?
  - What are some of the times when these same participants have been engaged?
  - What are the agreements we have in place for listening to and learning from everyone in the room who is part of our learning community?
  - How can I use these questions to understand what is taking place and to redirect the participants’ attention to the subject at hand?

## **Participant Participation**

- Which individuals are not participating?
- Which groups of people are not participating? (e.g. a particular gender, English language learners, white participants, participants of color)
- What is the nature of the participation I am expecting?
- What have I put in place to encourage whole class discussion or to create opportunities for many voices to be heard during the class?
- Is there opportunity for participants who speak English as a second language to rehearse their answer in pairs for example?
- How can I cultivate a climate in which "mistakes" or partially correct answers are acceptable and perceived as opportunities for learning?
- Am I giving appropriate wait time for different participants depending on their need and strength?
- How much am I talking in comparison to the participants' talking?
- What opportunities and support have I created for participants to lead the discussion and ask some of the questions?

## **Teacher Attention**

- Where do I seem to direct my questions?
- Do I seem to get the answers from the same participants most of the time?
- What is my proximity to those participants who seem to be engaged and those who do not seem to be engaged?
- Do I move around the room and make contact with different group of participants in terms of their seating arrangements, their familiarity with the language of instruction, racial backgrounds?
- Do I address my questions or attention to the participants who are not raising their hands?

## **Teacher Tone**

- What words and tone of voice do I use to express my expectations of the class?
- Do I begin by threatening, highlighting the negative consequences that will ensue if the participants don't comply with my expectations?
- Do I stress the positive intrinsic outcomes that will be experienced through their participation?
- Do I express high expectations of all participants in terms of my knowledge of them as individuals who are capable of demonstrating their best effort?
- Do I redirect participants to the task at hand by finding out what has taken them away from it?
- Do I redirect their attention by reminding them of an instance when they did good work and made a sincere effort?



□ **Teacher Directions**

- Which individual participants and which groups are following my directions?
- Which ones are not?
- Is there a pattern with either group?
- What strategies have I used to ensure that my directions are heard, understood and that the logic of my instructions is clear?
- Did I attract the attention of the whole class before I began giving the directions?
- Do I give directions in both spoken and written form?
- Do I give a chance for questions and clarifications after the directions have been given?
- Do I sometimes build in an opportunity for a participant to review the directions with the class so that I can see if they are understood and whether they reflect my intentions?
- Do we have agreements in the class that encourage participants to help each other in the spirit of a learning community to work on the activities at hand?
- What are the participants doing when they are not following directions?
- How can I use this information to change the situation?

