

Equity and Culturally Responsive Assessment Practices

In the education context, anti-racism refers to a commitment to actively challenging and dismantling systemic racism within educational institutions and promoting equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students, regardless of their racial or ethnic background. It involves recognizing and addressing the ways in which racism operates within educational systems, policies, curriculum, school processes and procedures, teaching pedagogical choices, practices, and interactions.

Here are some anti-racist practices that can be implemented in education:

1. **Culturally responsive teaching***: Educators incorporate diverse perspectives, experiences, and cultural references into their curriculum and teaching practices. This helps validate students' identities and fosters a sense of belonging.
2. **Anti-bias curriculum**: Explicitly address issues of racism, discrimination, and social justice. This includes teaching about the history and experiences of different racial and ethnic groups, promoting critical thinking, and creating the space and conditions to engage in constructive dialogue about these topics.
3. **Diverse representation**: Ensure that teaching materials, textbooks, and classroom resources reflect the diversity of the student population in your class and school context. Incorporate diverse authors, historical figures, scientists, artists, characters, and other role models into the curriculum.
4. **Professional development**: Engage in ongoing professional development opportunities for educators to enhance understanding of racism, unconscious/implicit bias, and culturally responsive teaching practices. This helps develop the necessary skills to create inclusive and anti-racist learning environments.
5. **Supportive and inclusive classroom, school, and work environments**: Foster a safe and respectful classroom environment where students, staff, families/caregivers and all stakeholders feel comfortable expressing their perspectives and experiences. Encourage open discussions about race, racism, and social justice, and address any instances of bias or discrimination immediately.
6. **Parent and community engagement**: Involve parents, families, and the broader community in anti-racist initiatives. Collaborate with families from diverse backgrounds to better understand their needs and perspectives and to ensure their voices are heard.
7. **Continuous self-reflection**: Engage in ongoing self-reflection and examination of your own biases. This involves acknowledging and challenging personal prejudices, assumptions, and privileges that may inadvertently perpetuate racism in the classroom, schools, and community.

**Culturally responsive pedagogy* and *culturally responsive pedagogy* are inherently anti-racist practices in education. By valuing and incorporating students' diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, these approaches actively challenge and combat racism within the educational system. They promote equity, inclusivity, empowerment, and overall well-being by honoring the identities and knowledge of all students, dismantling systemic biases, and ensuring fair and culturally relevant assessments.

Culturally relevant pedagogy acknowledges and values the cultural backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge of students, recognizing that these aspects play a crucial role in their learning. It involves incorporating culturally significant content, examples, and perspectives into the curriculum to make learning more meaningful, relatable and relevant for students and thereby fostering academic success and positive identity development.

Culturally responsive pedagogy builds upon culturally relevant pedagogy by emphasizing the teacher's role in actively engaging with students' cultural backgrounds, perspectives, and lived experiences. Teachers seek to make choices that reflect and connect to students' backgrounds, histories, experiences, and cultural contexts.

Steps towards designing equitable and culturally relevant assessment practices...

Instead of...	Try...
<p>Assessments with cultural bias</p> <p>Assessments that do not incorporate students' cultural backgrounds or diverse perspectives can disadvantage students from marginalized racial or ethnic groups. This lack of cultural responsiveness can make the assessment content and questions less accessible and relevant to these students, affecting their performance.</p>	<p>Culturally responsive assessments incorporate students' cultural backgrounds, and diverse experiences and perspectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and Objective Criteria: Clearly define the criteria for assessment and communicate them to students in a transparent manner. Ensure that the criteria are objective, relevant to the learning objectives, and free from any hidden biases. • Multiple Assessment Methods: Utilize a variety of assessment methods to capture students' diverse strengths and abilities. Include opportunities for performance-based tasks, projects, multi-media and visual presentations, discussions, portfolios, etc. to accommodate students' preferred learning and assessment styles. • Diverse Examples and Content: Ensure that assessment materials and examples reflect diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. Avoid using examples or scenarios that may be unfamiliar or exclusive to certain groups. • Inclusive Language and Imagery: Use inclusive language in assessment prompts, questions, and instructions. Avoid language that may marginalize or disadvantage certain groups of students. Incorporate diverse and representative imagery when applicable.
<p>Biased teacher expectations</p> <p>Teachers' expectations of students can be influenced by racial biases, resulting in different levels of support, opportunities, and feedback. For example, a teacher may have lower expectations for academic performance or behavior for students from marginalized racial or ethnic backgrounds, leading to inequitable assessment practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on Personal Biases: Engage in regular self-reflection to identify and address personal biases. Be aware of preconceived notions or stereotypes that may influence expectations of student performance. • Set High Expectations for All Students: Establish high expectations for all students regardless of their background or previous performance. Believe in their potential and provide the necessary support and resources to help them succeed. • Building Relationships: Foster positive and respectful relationships with students by getting to know their cultural backgrounds, experiences, and interests, celebrate their achievements, and create a sense of belonging. • Design learning experiences that encourage collaboration and interaction among students from diverse backgrounds. Foster opportunities for students to work together, share their knowledge, and learn from one another's perspectives.
<p>Disproportionate disciplinary actions</p> <p>Disciplinary practices can disproportionately target students from certain racial or ethnic groups, resulting in biased assessment of behavior and contributing to unequal outcomes. For instance, students from marginalized</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement compassionate practices and address bias in disciplinary actions to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all students. • Collaborative Decision-Making: Foster collaboration between students (and parents/caregivers when

backgrounds may face harsher punishments or more frequent disciplinary actions compared to their peers.	possible) in actions and using practices that promote open communication, active listening, and shared decision-making.
Limited representation in curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limiting representation to dominant groups or cultures in curriculum means excluding images, contributions, histories, experiences, and achievements of racialized and/or marginalized groups Continues to exclude and marginalize racialized and non-dominant groups Continues to reinforce and perpetuate stereotypes, continues to privilege dominant groups Deprives students the opportunity to see themselves reflected in the achievements and contributions to society by individuals from their own backgrounds, cultures, and communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive Curriculum Development: Include diverse voices and accurate representation in the curriculum development process to ensure representation of various racialized groups. Expanding representation in the curriculum is crucial for promoting racial equity in education. It involves intentionally incorporating diverse racial and ethnic perspectives, histories, and contributions into educational materials. By doing so, students see themselves reflected, fostering a sense of belonging and positive self-esteem. It also promotes critical thinking and a more comprehensive understanding of the world by exposing students to diverse perspectives and challenging stereotypes.
Exclusionary assessment processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepting only one type of evidence of learning; that privileges those students who excel in demonstrating that learning in that way best, and preventing students who demonstrate their learning best in other ways from truly showing what they <i>know</i> and can <i>do</i>. For example, everyone must show what they <i>know</i>, <i>understand</i>, and can <i>do</i> by communicating in writing. Inadequate or insufficient accommodation for students with diverse needs or cultural backgrounds can impede their ability to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. For example, not providing language support or appropriate assistive technologies for students with disabilities can result in unfair assessment outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal design for assessment that ensures accessibility and accommodates students with diverse needs, cultural backgrounds, strengths, and fluencies. Allow for Multiple Modes of Expression (Triangulating Evidence of Learning): Offer options for students to provide evidence of learning in a variety of ways; observations, conversations, and choice in products so, that students can demonstrate their learning in a mode that works best for them. This ensures that learning is honoured and teachers have a more accurate picture of the students' level of knowledge, skills/competencies, and understanding.
Bias in assessment and feedback Assessment and feedback practices can be influenced by biases, resulting in unequal treatment of students. This can manifest as inconsistent or subjective grading standards, favoritism, or feedback that does not support students' growth and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity-focused grading and feedback practices that are fair, transparent, and free from bias. Provide descriptive feedback that supports all students' growth and development by identifying students' strengths and next steps for improvement. Focus on co-constructing success criteria and sharing what students should <i>know</i> and be able to <i>do</i> at each level of the proficiency scale so that expectations are clear and not privileging some students while marginalizing others.

Sources

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