

KEY COMPONENTS OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Access

Instruction

Materials

Assessment

Attitudes

Interactions

Language

Access - Access refers to both physical and institutional access to learning facilities, resources, and curricular programs in order to ensure every student is provided an equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of the educational process.

Selected Strategies

- Ensure all students are given access to and have the opportunity to achieve the same high standards
- Give high-needs students the extra time, instruction, and resources they need to succeed
- Do not reserve rigorous classroom activities for a select few - ensure all students are challenged with curricula and instructional strategies that require reasoning, problem solving, and critical thinking
- When students work together, make sure groups are diverse and structured so that all members are able to take active roles

Instruction - Instruction involves the use of instructional materials portraying positive images & varying perspectives of diverse groups as well as a strong commitment to an equitable approach to teaching and learning through:

- Honoring diverse teaching and learning styles
- Confronting bias and stereotypes
- Displaying respect for diversity

Selected Strategies

Learning and Teaching Styles - A teacher's goal should be to explore various teaching styles to meet the needs of individual students and to further the learning of the class as a whole:

- Incorporate hands-on learning, a method that appeals to almost all students
- Break students into small-groups for discussion and problem solving activities
- Whenever possible, make connections between subject matter and the lives of students

Confronting Bias and Stereotypes in the Classroom - Teachers cannot control all of the messages students receive but they can confront bias and stereotyping in their schools and classrooms:

- Establish a clear policy prohibiting racial or sexual harassment and enforce it
- Point out instances of cultural or sex discrimination or bias as they occur in class and correct them
- Use examples of bias found in classroom materials as prompts for discussing discrimination and bias

Respect for Diversity - Teachers in multicultural classrooms can take advantage of the diversity of their students to enrich their learning experiences:

- Celebrate diverse cultural, religious, and national holidays. Involve students in preparations and presentations.
- Explore cultural celebrations or observances of life transitions or rites of passage. Compare and contrast cultural similarities and differences.
- Emphasize that all people have a culture. Include all students in discussions of cultural heritage and background.

Materials - Materials such as textbooks, audiovisual aids, and supplemental lessons should be screened to minimize if not eliminate bias in terms of content, graphics, pictures, and language.

Selected Strategies

- Screen all materials used in class for bias.

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- Replace biased materials with bias-free materials. If bias cannot be eliminated, note its presence and use it as an opportunity to discuss bias and stereotyping in class.
- Include contributions from non-European sources to provide a balanced study of world cultures.

Assessment - Ensuring equity and excellence in school settings requires the use of assessment that accounts for variances in student learning styles and cultural backgrounds and is effectively aligned with school curricula, instruction, and improvement goals.

Selected Strategies

- Use multiple assessment strategies; combine traditional forms of assessment with alternative or performance-based models
- Ensure all assessments are developed to measure the skills intended and will not reflect differences in student experiences, cultural values, or the quality of education received
- Ensure appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities and limited English proficiency

Attitudes - Attitudes not only mold a school's educational environment, but can also directly impact students' lives. Biased or prejudiced attitudes may be unintentional, but can nevertheless result in discriminatory behavior that hinders student performance.

Selected Strategies

- Be aware of your own attitudes and how they may influence how you treat students.
- Examine problematic relationships with students to determine whether bias is a factor.
- Educate yourself on how biased attitudes are formed. Seek out examples that counter stereotypes and biased attitudes.

Interactions - Interactions are perhaps the greatest influence on self-esteem & motivation and can have a profound effect on a student's enthusiasm and ability to learn. Interactions are shaped by attitudes which often mask a tendency to relate to students differently depending on race, gender, ethnicity, ability, or other factors.

Selected Strategies

- Demonstrate the same high expectations for all students. Communicate these expectations regularly and challenge all students equally in terms of both performance and effort.
- Give less confident students more time to raise their hands and to respond to questions posed.
- Monitor your use of praise. Make certain all students are reinforced equally for their work and effort.

Language - Bias in language is a subtle but powerful influence in creating or reinforcing prejudicial attitudes and perspectives.

Selected Strategies

- Watch your own language and usage in class—for example, using “girls” to refer to adult women
- Become informed about nonbiased alternatives and use them at school
- Take advantage of opportunities to point out biased language in a productive, nonaccusatory way