

Beyond *Celebrating Diversity*: 20 Things I Will Do to Be an Equitable Educator

1. I will learn to pronounce each student's name correctly. Students should never feel the need to shorten or change their names to make it easier for me or anyone else to pronounce them.
2. I will step out of my comfort zone by building a process for continually assessing, reflecting upon, and challenging my biases, prejudices, and socializations and how they influence my expectations for, and relationships with, each student, family, and colleague.
3. I will review all learning materials, ensuring that they are free of bias whether in implicit or explicit forms. When I find bias in required materials I will encourage students to recognize and analyze it.
4. I will learn and teach about the ways people in the subject areas I teach have used their knowledge to advocate for either justice or injustice.
5. I will reject deficit ideology—the temptation to identify the problem of outcome disparities (such as test scores) as *existing within* rather than as *pressing upon* marginalized communities. I will remember that such disparities do not result from supposed deficiencies in marginalized communities, but instead are symptoms of structural educational and social conditions. This means I must find solutions to these problems that focus, not on “fixing” marginalized communities, but on fixing the conditions and practices that marginalize communities.
6. I will teach about issues like racism, sexism, poverty, and heterosexism. Despite false perceptions that younger students are not “ready” for these conversations, I will begin doing so at the youngest ages. Students from marginalized communities already are experiencing these problems and witnessing their families experiencing them.
7. I will understand the relationship between *intent* and *impact*. Often, particularly when I'm in a situation in which I experience privilege, I have the luxury of referring and responding only to what I intended, regardless of the impact I've had. I must take responsibility for and learn from my impact because most individual-level oppression is unintentional. But unintentional oppression hurts just as much as intentional oppression.
8. I will reject the myth of color-blindness. As uncomfortable as it may be to admit, I know that I react differently when I'm in a room full of people who share many dimensions of my identity than when I'm in a room full of people who are very different from me. I must be open and honest about this reality, because those shifts inevitably inform the experiences of the people with whom I interact. In addition, color-blindness denies people validation of their whole person.
9. I will keep in mind that some students do not enjoy the same level of access to educational materials and resources, such as computers and the Internet, as other students. I will be thoughtful about how I assign homework.

10. I will build coalitions with educators who are different from me in terms of race, sexual orientation, gender, religion, home language, class, (dis)ability, and other identities. These can be valuable relationships for feedback and collaborative problem-solving. At the same time, I must not rely on other people to identify my weaknesses. In particular, in the areas of my identity through which I experience privilege, I must not rely on people from marginalized groups to teach me how to improve myself (which is, in and of itself, a practice of privilege).
11. I will improve my skills as a facilitator so that, when issues such as racism or heterosexism arise in the classroom, I can take advantage of the resulting educational opportunities.
12. I will elicit anonymous feedback from students and, when I do, I will model a willingness to be changed by their presence to the same extent they are changed by mine.
13. I will not *essentialize* students from identity groups different from my own. Despite the popularity of workshops and literature that suggest that we need to know only one dimension of a student's identity in order to know her learning needs, culture, and proclivities, such a presumption is dangerously simplistic. There is no such thing as a singular, predictable "culture of poverty" or Asian "learning style." One's racial identity is not a reasonable predictor of her interests or gifts. I will refuse these simplifications.
14. I will offer an integrated equity-based curriculum, not just during special months or celebrations, but all year, every day.
15. I will understand inequity, not just as an interpersonal issue, but as a systemic issue. Although I might not consider the fight against global sexism or world poverty as within my purview, part of understanding students is understanding the ways conditions and inequities within the education system affect them.
16. I will encourage students to think critically and ask critical questions about all of the information they receive, including the information they receive from me.
17. I will challenge myself to take personal responsibility before looking for fault elsewhere. For example, if I have one student who is falling behind or being disruptive, I will consider what I am doing or not doing that might be contributing to their disengagement before blaming their behavior or effort.
18. I will work to ensure that students from marginalized communities are not placed unjustly into lower academic tracks. I will fight to get them into gifted and talented programs. Better yet, considering that three decades of research demonstrate that tracking benefits only the five percent of highest achievers, I will fight tracking altogether.
19. I will advocate for equity for *all* underrepresented or marginalized students. Equity is not a game of choice; if I am to claim that I am committed to equity, I do not have the luxury of choosing who does or does not have access to it. For example, I cannot fight effectively for racial equity while I fail to confront gender inequity. And I can never be a real advocate for gender equity if I duck the responsibility for ensuring equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students. When I find myself justifying my inattention to any group of marginalized people due to the worldview or value system into which I was socialized, I know it is time to reevaluate that worldview or value system.
20. I will celebrate myself as an educator. I can and should also celebrate every moment I spend in critical self-reflection about my teaching, however challenging it may be, because it makes me a more equitable educator. And *that* is something to celebrate!