

20 Things That I Can Do to Be a More Equitable Educator

1. I will learn to pronounce every student's full given name correctly. No student should feel the need to shorten or change their name to make it easier for me or their classmates to pronounce. I will practice and learn every name, regardless of how difficult it feels or how time consuming it becomes. That is the first step in being inclusive.
2. I will sacrifice the safety of my comfort zone by building a process for continually assessing, understanding, and challenging my biases and prejudices and how they impact my expectations for, and relationships with, all students, parents, and colleagues.
3. I will center student voices, interests, and experiences in and out of my classroom. Even while I talk passionately about being inclusive and student-centered in the classroom, I rarely include or center students in conversations about school reform. I must face this contradiction and rededicate to sharing power with my students.
4. I will engage in a self-reflection process to explore how my identity development impacts the way that I see and experience different people.
5. I will invite critique from colleagues and accept it openly. I usually do well accepting feedback—until someone decides to offer me feedback. Though it's easy to become defensive in the face of critique, I will thank the person for their time and courage (knowing that it's not easy to critique a colleague). The worst possible scenario is for people to stop providing me with feedback, whether positive or negative.
6. I will never stop being a student. If I do not grow, learn, and change at the same rate that the world around me is changing, then I inescapably lose touch with the lives and contexts of my students. I must continue to educate myself—to learn from the experiences of my students and their families, to study current events and their relationship to what I am teaching, and to be challenged by a diversity of perspectives.
7. I will understand the relationship between *intent* and *impact*. Often, and particularly when I am in a situation in which I experience some level of privilege, I have the luxury of referring and responding only to what I intended, no matter the impact that I've had on somebody. I must take responsibility for, and learn from, my impact because individual-level oppression is unintentional. However, unintentional oppression hurts just as much as intentional oppression.
8. I will reject the myth of colorblindness. As painful as it may be to admit, I know that I react differently when I'm in a room full of people who share my 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 that because these shifts inevitably inform the experiences of people in my classes. In addition, colorblindness denies people validation of their whole person.

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9. I will recognize my own social identity group memberships and how they may affect my students' experiences and learning processes. People do not always experience me the way in which I intended, even if I am an active advocate for all my students. A student's initial reaction to me may be based on a lifetime of experiences, so I must try not to take such reactions personally.
10. I will build coalitions with teachers who are different from me (in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, religion, first languages, disability, and other identities). These can be valuable relationships of trust and ones that offer honest critique. At the same time, I must not rely on other people to identify my weaknesses. In particular, in the areas of my identity that I experience privilege, I must not rely on people from historically underprivileged 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 of diversity and equity do arise in the classroom, I can take advantage of the resulting educational opportunities. Too often, I allow these moments to slip away, either because I am uncomfortable with the topic or because I feel unprepared to effectively facilitate my students through it. (I often try to make myself feel better by suggesting that the students "aren't ready" to talk about racism, sexism, or whatever the topic might be, when it's more honest to say that I do not feel ready.) I will hone these skills so that I do not cheat my students out of important conversations and learning opportunities.
12. I will invite critique from my students, and when I do, I will dedicate myself to listening actively and modeling a willingness to be changed by their presence to the same extent that they are changed by mine.
13. I will think critically about how my preferred learning styles impact my teaching style. I am usually thoughtful about diversifying my teaching style to address the needs of students with a variety of learning styles. Still, I tend to fall back on my most comfortable teaching style most often. I will fight this temptation and work harder to engage all of my students.
14. I will affirm and model an appreciation for *all* forms of intelligence and the wide variety of ways that students illustrate their mastery of skills and knowledge.
15. I will reflect on my own experiences as a student and how they inform my teaching. Research indicates that my teaching is most closely informed by my experiences as a student (even more so than my previous training). The practice of drawing on these experiences—positive and negative—provides important insights regarding my teaching practice.