

Lesson Plan and Overview

Lesson Plan: Everyday Bias

It seems like we are seeing an increase of news and social media stories about people experiencing bias as they go about their daily lives—riding the subway, shopping in a store, dining in a restaurant and hanging out with friends. Indeed, the surge of such stories makes it seem like racism, sexism and other forms of bias and discrimination are becoming more pervasive. In the wake of the April 2018 Starbucks incident in which a white employee called the police about two African-American men who were waiting for a colleague and had asked to use the bathroom without making a purchase, everyday bias is an important topic to discuss. Are bias incidents like these on the rise, or are we just hearing more about them? Are there more stories coming out because there is greater public consciousness about bias or because people are using their smartphones to record these incidents?

Grade Level

Grades 9–12

Learning Objectives

- Students will reflect on examples of everyday bias and the impact it has on those in the targeted group(s).
- Students will explore what actions can be taken in order to make their school or community spaces more welcoming and inclusive for all.

Materials Needed

- Video: [Starbucks Showed This Short Film to Its Employees to Teach Them About Racial Bias](#)
- Post-it notes or index cards for students (at least 3 per student)

Words You Might Use

Bias: An inclination or preference either for or against an individual or group that interferes with impartial judgment. Bias can be conscious (explicit or overt and intentional) or unconscious (implicit or unintentional and based on assumptions and “norms”), but both are potentially harmful regardless of intent.

Discrimination: The denial of justice, resources and fair treatment of individuals and groups (often based on social identity), through employment, education, housing, banking, political rights, etc. Discrimination is an action that can follow prejudicial thinking. Discrimination can be legally sanctioned (de jure) or can exist despite nondiscrimination laws or policies in place (de facto).

Implicit Bias: The unconscious attitudes, stereotypes and unintentional actions (positive or negative) towards members of a group merely because of their membership in that group. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through socialization and exposure to direct and indirect messages. When people are acting out of their implicit bias, they are not aware that their actions are biased. In fact, those biases may be in direct conflict with a person's explicit beliefs and values.

Core Activity

First, show the video [Starbucks Showed This Short Film to Its Employees to Teach Them About Racial Bias](#). Explain to students that as a result of the April 2018 Starbucks incident in which a white employee called the police about two African-American men who were waiting for a colleague and had asked to use the bathroom without making a purchase, all Starbucks employees were required to attend training on racial bias, and this video was part of the training. You may want to have students jot down notes while watching the video. After watching, have students turn and talk with someone sitting next to them to share their initial thoughts and feelings about what they watched. Then, engage students in a class discussion by asking some or all the following questions.

- *What is the video about?*
- *What stood out for you while watching the video?*
- *Someone in the video says, "I feel like I'm disturbing people like just being there." What does this mean and how do you think the person feels about it?*
- *How do you think the people in the video feel about having to face this bias in their everyday lives?*
- *Can you relate to what the people in the video are saying, or not? Please explain.*
- *Why do you think the video discussed the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s and how that movement was about the "right to be respected in public places?"*
- *What does the phrase, "being allowed in doesn't always mean being welcomed?"*
- *What do you think it means that that black and white people (or women and men) have to navigate public spaces and places differently?*
- *What words, phrases or quotes were particularly meaningful for you?*
- *What can we do about this kind of everyday bias and racism that people encounter as they go about their lives?*

Next, talk about examples of everyday bias. You can share the "Examples of Everyday Bias" from the lesson plan or ask students for examples they have heard or read about in the news. If you allow cell phone or tablet use in the classroom, you can have students do a quick search of news stories or search hashtags such as #DrivingWhileBlack,

#ShoppingWhileBlack and #LivingWhileBlack. Ask students to share examples they found and discuss in what ways they are examples of everyday bias.

Finally, use the question posed at the end of the video, *“What can you do to make our public spaces—our schools, our parks, our stores, our restaurants as welcoming as they can be?”* to have students explore, in the form of a short essay, an answer to that question—what they can do make their school or community more welcoming and inclusive. Then have students illustrate their essays in one of the following ways: (1) create a poster (paper or digital) with their response and an illustration, (2) take a photograph of themselves with their response or (3) make a short video with them sharing their response (which could include other props or people). Share the responses school-wide by displaying them in common areas and/or sharing online or on the school’s website.

Optional Follow-Up/ Going Further

Note: These additional activities can be done as follow-ups to the core activity and they can also serve as an additional NPFH activity if the core activity is completed first.

- Distribute post-it notes or index cards (at least 3 per student) and watch the video again; this time have students write down individual words or phrases that stand out to them or one-word responses to what they watched. Have students write the words/phrases on individual post-its/index cards and then hang them up on a wall or board in the front of the room. Choose a word/phrase and ask students, “Tell me more about this word/phrase” and allow anyone to respond. Engage students in this process a few times, selecting different words/phrases and inviting students to share their thoughts about it. Then, read all of the words aloud or allow students to come up and see all of the words on the board. Have each student select one of the words/phrases (it doesn’t have to be the one they wrote) and create a sentence using that word/phrase. Then, divide students into small groups of 4-6 students each and have them combine all of their sentences to create a verse of poetry. Have them read the verses aloud and consider how to amplify all of the verses school-wide, either by reading them at an assembly, displaying them in common areas or posting them online.
- Based on the ideas students wrote about in the core activity about actions they can take in their school or community, select one or more possible actions the school community can take to make it more welcoming and inclusive for all. Come up with an action plan that includes the short and long-term goals, activities, timeline, roles (who will do what) and resources needed. The NPFH committee can oversee the process and ensure that all students are involved in the process and execution of the action plans.
- Have students share their own personal experiences of everyday bias, something they experienced themselves or witnessed. Divide students into groups of 3–4 students each and explain that they will respond, one

at a time, to four questions about everyday bias. Then, read each question and then provide a minute per student to respond to each question, reminding them to take turns and take one minute each.

- *Have you ever experienced (as a target or witness) everyday bias in public spaces? What happened?*
- *How did you feel when you experienced this bias?*
- *What did you do or what did you wish you could have done?*
- (Optional) *Have you ever acted upon an act of bias that you now realize was biased?*

After the small groups, reconvene the class and ask for volunteers to share something that came out of their small group discussion, by asking each of the four questions one at a time. Remind students that they should only share aloud their own thoughts, ideas and feelings, not what someone else shared.

Home Connection

Share ADL's Table Talk [What is Everyday Bias?](#) with families.

How Activity Meets NPFH Requirements

All students will engage in discussions about everyday bias and increase their understanding and empathy for those who have been targeted by bias in these situations. Students will also explore ideas for how to make their school or community more welcoming and inclusive for all students and if time permits, will execute one or more of those ideas.

Virtual Variation

Have students watch the [Starbucks Showed This Short Film to Its Employees to Teach Them About Racial Bias](#) video on their own. After watching, engage students in a virtual classroom conversation using the discussion questions or pair students up and have them talk with a partner on their own. For the next part of the activity, make (and share) a short video of yourself talking about what "everyday bias" means, sharing examples that you know about or using examples from the lesson plan. Have students explore other examples of everyday bias either from their own experience, situations they have witnessed, news articles or social media. Students will post these examples on a sharing platform. Then have students answer the question posed at the end of the video, "What can you do to make our public spaces—our schools, our parks, our stores, our restaurants as welcoming as they can be?" Have students write a short essay or make a video recording that responds to that question and share their responses.

EXAMPLES OF EVERYDAY BIAS

1. In April 2018, five African American women were playing golf at the Grandview Golf Course in Pennsylvania. They were told by the club's owners that they were moving too slowly on the golf course and then called the police. When the police arrived, they learned the reason they were called was because of a dispute between the club's management and the golfers. They talked with both groups for about 20 minutes and then determined that further police involvement was not necessary. One of the women said, "I felt like we were discriminated against. It was a horrific experience." (Rachel Siegel, "[White golf course owners said five African American women were playing too slowly. Then they called the police.](#)" *The Washington Post*, April 25, 2018.)
2. In May 2018 in California, Jazmina Saavedra, a Republican U.S. congressional candidate, barged in on a person, who appeared to be a transgender woman, using the restroom at a Denny's restaurant and livestreamed the episode. She turned the camera to the stall door and said "there's a man here saying that he's a lady." Saavedra then confronted the woman, who eventually came out of the bathroom in a black hoodie and was escorted out of the restaurant. As she left the restaurant, Saavedra screamed, "Next time use the men's room." Denny's apologized and called the behavior "disrespectful." (Crystal Hill, "[House candidate livestreams Denny's bathroom over 'man inside saying he's a lady,' video shows.](#)" *The Sacramento Bee*, May 18, 2018.)
3. In May 2018, at a Starbucks in California, the word "beaner" (a racial slur for Mexican people) was printed on the cup of a Latino customer. The customer was out on a coffee run from work; when he returned to work at a nearby restaurant with the cup, his colleague noticed the word on his cup. The colleague called Starbucks to complain about the incident and was told that "their employee couldn't understand what Pedro had told them" then offered her a \$50 gift card. (Nikita Richardson, "[Starbucks Didn't Fix Racism at Its Stores Fast Enough.](#)" *Grub Street*, May 18, 2018.)
4. In May 2018 in a restaurant in New York City, a man berated customers and employees for speaking Spanish and then threatened to call immigration officials. According to a video recording of the incident, the man says "Your staff is speaking Spanish to customers when they should be speaking English. Every person I listen to: He spoke it, he spoke it, she's speaking it. This is America!" He continued to rant to an employee and then threatened to call ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) officials saying, "My guess is they're not documented. So my next call is to ICE to have each one of them kicked out of my country." (Faith Karimi and Eric Levenson, "[Man to Spanish speakers at New York restaurant: 'My next call is to ICE'](#)," *CNN*, May 17, 2018.)
5. In May 2018 in Florida, a man approached five young men who were eating in a McDonald's parking lot and asked them, "Are you American boys?" The young men, all international students from Egypt who ranged in age from 19 to 23, did not respond. According to the report, the man then flashed his pocket knife, opened and closed it and shouted, "Get the ... out of my country!" using the f-word, and then said, "You don't deserve American food!" At this point the five men decided to leave but the man grabbed a [stun gun](#) from his truck and as the men rushed to get back into their cars, the man charged at them with the stun gun drawn. As the man continued coming at them, they got out of the parking lot and called the police. (Meagan Flynn, "['You don't deserve American food!': Muslim students attacked at McDonald's, police say.](#)" *The Washington Post*, May 25, 2018.)