

LESSON PLAN

When You are the Target: How to Respond and Challenge Bias

How can we address and challenge bias when we are targeted?

Grade Level		Time	Common Core Standards
K-1	2-6	45-60 minutes	Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, Language.
7-8	9-12		

LESSON OVERVIEW

In schools and classrooms across the country, many young people face bias and discrimination in everyday life. The bias can come from other students, teachers, school staff or the school policies—or lack of inclusive, equitable school policies. Bias can take the form of slurs, hate symbols, name-calling, bullying, disrespect, exclusion, other forms of discrimination and more. Students have to contend with this bias and then decide if they want to do anything about it and if so, what to do. In addition to encouraging other students to act as allies for each other, it is important that students learn skills to respond to and challenge the bias they face.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to explore bias situations in school and learn strategies for responding to and challenging bias, in particular when they are the target.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will reflect on their own and others' experiences with facing bias in school.
- Students will consider ways to respond to bias when they are the target.
- Students will explore school scenarios involving bias and possible ways to respond to and challenge bias.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

- Videos to watch together:
 - [“Because I’m Latino, I can’t have money?” Kids on Race](#)
 - [Jewish teens discuss personal encounters with antisemitism in school and online](#)
 - [Let’s Talk Bias](#)
 - [How Sexism Has Become the New Normal for Girls at School](#)
- [Responses to Bias: Stop, Feel, Think, Act](#) (one copy for each student or project on board/smart board)
- [Scenarios](#) (divide up and distribute one per small group)
- [Scenario Discussion Questions](#) (one copy for each student)



Web Related Connections

LESSON PLANS

[Antisemitic Incidents: Ally, Advocate and Activist](#)

[Microaggressions in our Lives](#)

[What is Everyday Bias?](#)

[Slurs, Offensive Jokes and How to Respond](#)

Other Resources:

[6 Ways to Be an Ally](#)

[Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism](#)

[When it Comes to Bias, We Must Prioritize Impact Over Intent](#)

Key Words

activism
advocacy
bias
challenge
discrimination
immigrant
institutional
interpersonal
stereotype
systems of bias

Opening: Young People Talk about Bias

1. With students, watch one or more of the videos below, or you can have students watch for homework the night before.
 - [“Because I’m Latino, I can’t have money?” Kids on Race](#)
 - [Jewish teens discuss personal encounters with antisemitism in school and online](#)
 - [Let’s Talk Bias](#)
 - [How Sexism Has Become the New Normal for Girls at School](#)
2. After each video, engage students in a brief discussion by asking some/all of the following questions:
 - What is happening in the video?
 - How does the young person in the video feel about the experiences they are describing?
 - What is the harm or impact on the person targeted?
3. Engage students in a brief discussion about all the videos, asking: *What are the common themes of the different videos and student voices? What can young people do about the bias they face? As they suggest possible actions, record those ideas on the board/smart board.*

What is Bias and Discrimination?

1. Explain to students that what the students experienced in the videos is bias and discrimination. Ask students: *What is bias?* Elicit and explain a definition as follows: “An inclination or preference, either for or against an individual or group, that interferes with impartial judgment.” Ask students to share examples of bias from the video(s) and other examples they’ve seen or experienced in their own lives.
2. Ask students: *What is a system of bias?* Elicit/explain that a system of bias is when the bias is part of and embedded into all parts of society. Examples of systems of bias are antisemitism, racism, sexism, ableism, etc. You can explain that individual acts of prejudice, bias and discrimination are informed by and contribute to these systems of bias, but the systems exist whether or not there are individual/ interpersonal acts of bias. To unpack further, explain that these three elements are part of any system of bias.
 - The system of bias has been present not only in recent times but also throughout history and is or has been a part of the rules, laws and institutions (e.g., education, criminal justice, media, work, healthcare, etc.) of the society.
 - The system of bias advantages (gives more benefits to or puts in a better position) one group of people and disadvantages (disrespects, harms, mistreats) other group(s) of people.
 - The system of bias is also present and seen in interpersonal communication and behavior (e.g., slurs, bullying, offensive language, stereotypes) that maintain and support inequities and injustice.
3. Explain that discrimination is an element of the systems of bias. Ask: *What is discrimination?* Elicit and explain a definition as follows: “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.” Ask students to share examples of discrimination from the video(s) and other examples they’ve seen or experienced in their own lives.
4. Share that we will be discussing incidents of bias and discrimination during the lesson and ask if they have any questions about these definitions.

 **Responding to Bias**

1. Invite students to turn and talk with someone sitting nearby to share an experience they've had with bias or discrimination. Have them share with their partner what happened, how they felt, how they responded, and what, if anything, they did to address or challenge it. Provide 4 minutes (2 minutes each) for this conversation.

(Note to Teacher: If you don't think there is necessary safety and comfort for students to discuss these experiences one-on-one, instead ask for a few volunteers to share their experiences.)

2. Reconvene the class and ask if any students would like to share with the whole class what they shared with their partner. Remind students that they should only share about their own experiences, not what their partners shared. Record on the board/smart board any actions that students took when experiencing bias or discrimination.
3. Share the following "Responses to Bias" chart with students, either as a **handout** or project on the board/smartboard.
4. Explain that this chart is one way to think about how to respond to bias when you are the target. Read aloud and explain all four of the steps and for each of the four, engage students in a brief discussion by asking:

STOP: Why stop as the first step? What will stopping or pausing do?

FEEL: Why focus on feelings or emotions? What will acknowledging our feelings do?

THINK: How is "think" different from "feel"? What will thinking do?

ACT: Why should we act? What will acting do?

 **Responses to Bias**

STOP	FEEL	THINK	ACT
<p>When faced with bias, take a pause or a breath in order to reflect on your feelings, thoughts and possible actions you may want to take. This pause can be a few seconds, minutes, hours or days—depending on what happened.</p>	<p>Acknowledge your feelings about what happened (both in the moment and later; sometimes feelings shift over time) and continue to reflect on them. Ask yourself: <i>What feelings are coming up for me right now? How do I feel right now? How do I feel a bit later?</i> There are many feelings that can arise when targeted by bias including anger, fear, sadness, embarrassment, shame and other feelings.</p>	<p>Think about what you observed and experienced. Ask yourself: <i>What's going on? What happened? Has something like this happened before? What do I want to do about it? Is it safe to say or do something? Will that be effective? Was this bias impersonal (communication between people and individuals) or institutional (policies and practices that are approved or imposed by institutions like schools, criminal justice system media, etc.)? What other information might I need before deciding to take action.</i></p>	<p>If you decide you want to do something, take the time to consider all the options, talking with friends, family and other trusted peers and adults. If you decide to do or say something in the moment, consider whether that's the best solution and the possible consequences. Identify others who can help or support you. Ask yourself: <i>How can I challenge this bias? What can I do that will make a difference? What will help prevent this from happening again? Will my actions be interpersonal or institutional?</i></p>

5. Following up on the last step (“Act”), ask students: *What are some ideas you have for saying or doing something when faced with bias? What are some things you have said or done (or seen others say or do) when faced with bias?* Brainstorm action ideas and add to the list already created above on the board/smart board. Here are some possible ideas:

- Say something to the person who directed the bias.

(This could include telling them to stop the behavior, sharing information that challenges the bias or stereotypes, asking questions to cause the aggressor to consider their actions, explaining the impact of their words and actions by sharing how you feel, trying to engage in respectful dialogue.)

- Ask trusted adults for help

(Trusted adults may include teachers, school counselors, administrators, parents or adult family members. You can ask them to tell the aggressors to stop the behavior and apologize to the person targeted, communicate and reinforce the school policies or class guidelines on respectful, inclusive and equitable behavior, take appropriate action and enforce procedures outlined in school policies and teach about the harmful effects of bias, harassment and discrimination.)

- If the bias is institutional (e.g., discipline policies), talk with others about approaching the school administration to discuss what the policy is and whether it can be updated or improved.
- Get more information or do a school survey to get more information about the issue.
- Engage in advocacy or activism. Define advocate as “someone who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy.” Define activist as “someone who gets involved in activities that are meant to achieve political or social change; this also includes being a member of an organization which is working on change.”)

Exploring Scenarios and Solutions

1. Divide students into 5-6 small groups and distribute a different **Scenario** and **Scenario Discussion Questions** sheet to each student. Each small group should have a different scenario.

[Note to Teacher: If any of these scenarios are too close to home and could cause a strong, harmful or emotional response, do not use that scenario.]

2. After students are situated in their groups, have them assign a reporter (someone who shares with the class their responses to some of the questions about their scenario) and a recorder (someone who takes notes based on the group discussion). Invite them to read their scenario and then explore the discussion questions and have a recorder write a summary of the responses.

The scenarios are as follows and are also on the handout.

- A Latina girl who recently moved here from Mexico is called an anti-immigrant slur while walking down the hallway and later in the day, students use more anti-immigrant language to talk about her or to her.
- A Black student has noticed that their grade in English is lower than students of other races, even though their test scores, essay grades and class participation are similar. Other Black students have told this student they notice the same thing.
- When a Jewish student goes to the restroom, someone draws a swastika on his notebook and later on, he finds a swastika written in marker on his locker.
- A girl goes into an information session about an after-school coding club. It’s mostly boys in the club and

the club president tells her she shouldn't join because she won't "fit in" and will feel "uncomfortable."

- An Asian student unpacks his lunch in the cafeteria and several students at the next table look uncomfortable. One says, "Eww, what is that? How can you eat that?"
- A student who uses a wheelchair is treated by her teacher as if she has learning disabilities, which she does not. The teacher rarely calls on her and constantly tells the girl she doesn't have to do the homework if she isn't "up to it."
- A soccer player who is gay is getting taunted with anti-LGBTQ+ slurs on social media by members of an opposing team. The student asks the coach what to do and the coach says, "It's just trash talk, everyone does it."

The discussion questions are as follows and also on the handout.

- What is happening here? How do you think the targeted person feels in this situation?
 - What do you think is the impact on the target?
 - What are some things the targeted person can do? What could they say or do to address or challenge the bias?
 - What skills, knowledge and mindset does the target need in order to address or challenge the bias?
 - What are some barriers to taking action? What are some concerns you would have if you experienced something like this?
 - How would the school community and school culture be improved if this kind of bias and discrimination was addressed?
 - Stepping back, how did you feel reading this scenario? Has anything like this ever happened? If so, how did you feel at the time? What did you or others do?
3. After working in their small groups, reconvene the class and invite each reporter to share their scenario and a summary of their small group discussion. After all the groups have shared, engage students in a whole group discussion by asking some/all of the following questions.
- After hearing all the scenarios and feedback, what did you notice? What do you wonder?
 - What ideas for taking action did you all come up with? What else do you need in order to take some of these actions?
 - What are your biggest takeaways from this lesson?

Closing

Engage students in a quick go round where each student completes one of these sentences of their choosing:

I think _____

I feel _____

I will _____

Additional Reading and Resources

- [Confronting Prejudice: How to Protect Yourself and Help Others](#) (Pepperdine University, July 9, 2016)
- [How to Respond to Discrimination and Bias](#) (The Jed Foundation)

Common Core Anchor Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
Reading
R7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
Writing
W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. W4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
Speaking and Listening
SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. SL2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
Language
L5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CASEL's SEL Competencies

COMPETENCIES
Self-Awareness: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.
Social Awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.
Relationship Skills: The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.
Responsible Decision-Making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

Responses to Bias

STOP	FEEL	THINK	ACT
<p>When faced with bias, take a pause or a breath in order to reflect on your feelings, thoughts and possible actions you may want to take. This pause can be a few seconds, minutes, hours or days—depending on what happened.</p>	<p>Acknowledge your feelings about what happened (both in the moment and later; sometimes feelings shift over time) and continue to reflect on them. Ask yourself: <i>What feelings are coming up for me right now? How do I feel right now? How do I feel a bit later?</i> There are many feelings that can arise when targeted by bias including anger, fear, sadness, embarrassment, shame and other feelings.</p>	<p>Think about what you observed and experienced. Ask yourself: <i>What's going on? What happened? Has something like this happened before? What do I want to do about it? Is it safe to say or do something? Will that be effective? Was this bias impersonal (communication between people and individuals) or institutional (policies and practices that are approved or imposed by institutions like schools, criminal justice system media, etc.)? What other information might I need before deciding to take action.</i></p>	<p>If you decide you want to do something, take the time to consider all the options, talking with friends, family and other trusted peers and adults. If you decide to do or say something in the moment, consider whether that's the best solution and the possible consequences. Identify others who can help or support you. Ask yourself: <i>How can I challenge this bias? What can I do that will make a difference? What will help prevent this from happening again? Will my actions be interpersonal or institutional?</i></p>

Scenarios

- A Latina girl who recently moved here from Mexico is called an anti-immigrant slur while walking down the hallway and later in the day, students use more anti-immigrant language to talk about her or to her.
- A Black student has noticed that their grade in English is lower than students of other races, even though their test scores, essay grades and class participation are similar. Other Black students have told this student they notice the same thing.
- When a Jewish student goes to the restroom, someone draws a swastika on his notebook and later on, he finds a swastika written in marker on his locker.
- A girl goes into an information session about an after-school coding club. It's mostly boys in the club and the club president tells her she shouldn't join because she won't "fit in" and will feel "uncomfortable."
- An Asian student unpacks his lunch in the cafeteria and several students at the next table look uncomfortable. One says, "Eww, what is that? How can you eat that?"
- A student who uses a wheelchair is treated by her teacher as if she has learning disabilities, which she does not. The teacher rarely calls on her and constantly tells the girl she doesn't have to do the homework if she isn't "up to it."
- A soccer player who is gay is getting taunted with anti-LGBTQ+ slurs on social media by members of an opposing team. The student asks the coach what to do and the coach says, "It's just trash talk, everyone does it."

Scenario Discussion Questions

Members of group: _____

Scenario: _____

1. What is happening here? How do you think the targeted person feels in this situation?
2. What do you think is the impact on the target?
3. What are some things the targeted person can do? What could they say or do to address or challenge the bias?
4. What skills, knowledge and mindset does the target need in order to address or challenge the bias?
5. What are some barriers to taking action? What are some concerns you would have if you experienced something like this?
6. How would the school community and school culture be improved if this kind of bias and discrimination was addressed?
7. Thinking about this process, how did you feel reading this scenario? Has anything like this ever happened? If so, how did you feel at the time? What did you or others do?