

Course To-Go

from **Becoming a More Equitable Educator: Mindsets and Practices**

by MIT's Teaching Systems Lab



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TEACHING SYSTEMS LAB

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Survey: Let us know how you are using Course To-Go

We want to build better products to help you use and share our content. Please help us!

Click [here](#) and fill out a brief (4 minute) survey about how you hope to use Course To-Go.

Introduction to Course-to-Go

This document is a minimally-formatted version of [Becoming a More Equitable Educator: Mindsets and Practices](#), a massive open online course (MOOC) by the [MIT Teaching Systems Lab](#) that originally launched on the edX platform. The text is basically the same as the edX course, but when helpful, we have removed material that is relevant only to the MOOC learning experience.

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Unit 0: Mindsets and Practices for Equity Teaching

Introduction to Becoming a More Equitable Educator: Mindsets and Practices

Video: Course Goals and Introduction

Welcome to *Becoming a More Equitable Educator: Mindsets and Practices*!

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

Becoming a more equitable educator is a lifelong pursuit. In this course, we want to help you take a few steps along that journey. Here's what we're hoping that we can do together:

1. We'll reflect on our thinking and reasoning, and we'll learn about a set of "educator mindsets," drawn from the work of Rich Milner, to help us attend to sources of bias and inequality.
2. We'll then use these new educator mindsets to think about "equity teaching practices" — concrete, actionable things educators can do to help culturally diverse students to thrive. We'll learn about these practices by visiting teachers across the country, hearing from experts, and reflecting on our own strengths and effective strategies. We'll try things out in "practice spaces" — digital simulations that let us rehearse for and reflect on challenging moments in teaching.
3. We'll envision this work as both urgent and lifelong. We'll develop practices and approaches that we can start using right away, and we'll commit to continuing to learn about research, mindsets, practices and strategies that can help us serve all of our students better.

In the course trailer linked above, Rich and Justin welcome you to the course and introduce you to our work together. Share the [YouTube link](#) or [edX course About Page link](#) with your colleagues, and encourage them to join you for this course!

Course Overview

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

Becoming a More Equitable Educator consists of six units, starting with this short “Unit 0” introduction. In Units 1-4, you will learn about a new educator mindset in each unit, see that mindset in action in real schools, and engage in activities that help you experiment with new equity teaching practices. In Unit 5, as a final project, you’ll share some of your learning from the course with colleagues.

We welcome educators and learners from all over the world in our courses. You'll notice that our case studies will focus on U.S. high schools, but we have designed the activities, assignments, and readings in the course to be flexible and adaptable to your interests, goals, and context. In the video below, Justin introduces you to the structure of the course.

Unit 0 Overview



Instructional Presentations

- Course Overview
- Equity Mindsets for Equity
- Using Educator Mindsets to Get a Fresh Look on Schools



Voices from the Field

- Why Does Equity Matter?



Activity and Assignment

- Assignment: “Why I’m Here” and Meet Your Classmates
- Readings and Resources for Unit 0



Logistics

- How to Take This Course (Taking this Course with Colleagues, Social Media, Meet our Team)

Unit 0 Assignment: "Why I'm Here" Letter

In this section, we'll ask you to write a short note to yourself reflecting on your motivation and goals.

Throughout the course, you will be completing activities and assignments to reflect on your context, deepen your learning, and practice using ideas from the course. We recommend using a **course journal** to collect your activities and assignments, as well as any notes from the course.

Instructions

Reflective writing is a great chance to set your intention for this course and for your work. Write a letter to yourself in your course journal that addresses some of the following points:

- **Your motivation:** What were your goals in taking this course? What are you hoping you'll be able to do at the end that is a challenge right now?
- **Your strengths:** What attitudes, talents, or aptitudes can you bring to this work that you think will help you succeed?
- **Your concerns:** Becoming a more equitable educator is hard, sensitive work! What questions, concerns, or worries do you have about engaging in this work or taking this course?

Now that you've established your intentions and concerns, reflect on how you might start to address them:

- **Your community:** With whom can you share your work in this course? With whom can you share your excitement, challenges, and new ideas?
- **Weekly goals:** When do you plan to do the work in this course (what days in the week)? How many hours? How can you hold yourself accountable? (Electronic reminders? Accountability buddy? Updates to your professional learning network?)

Getting Ready to Learn and Building a Supportive Learning Community

Here are some tips for equity learning, both individually and in community. We hope you will take what you are learning and share it with others in your context; we hope these tips will help you and your community engage in these issues productively.

1. **Be open to new ideas and perspectives.** Doing equity work often requires us to “unlearn” things we’ve been taught, either explicitly (like in a teacher training program) or implicitly (through cultural expectations or norms). Curiosity, open-mindedness, and humility will serve you well on the journey of becoming a more equitable educator, as will a tolerance for uncertainty, non-closure, and discomfort.
2. **Reject perfection and be prepared to make mistakes.** We all have room to grow when it comes to tackling inequities in education — even experts in this topic! Give yourself space to be an imperfect learner. This means you may make mistakes. If that happens in the forums, try to receive any feedback from fellow learners graciously. Reflect on what happened, and if there’s any harm that needs to be repaired (because things said with good intentions can still cause harm). Be mindful of the emotions that come up for you. Then, allow yourself to “fail forward” by learning from the experience and trying a different approach next time.
3. **Be respectful.** It’s essential to be respectful. When doing equity work, there will be people in a learning community with different views, knowledge, backgrounds, and experiences. But we think that respectful listening and conversation are the foundations of a supportive learning community. Insulting or abusive words should not be tolerated.

In your course journal, you may want to make a list of any additional things you think may help you build a supportive learning community.

Video: Voices from the Field: Why Does Equity Matter?

Why Does Equity Matter?

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In our Voices from the Field video, you will see what equity means to educators from our featured schools and TSL's [TeachLab podcast](#), and why working on making schools more equitable is important to them. We've included each of the educator's name, role, and affiliated school below, in order of appearance. As you go through the course, you will learn more about these educators, their schools, and the equity work they are doing.

- Colin Rose, Assistant Superintendent, Office of Opportunity Gaps, Boston Public Schools
- Lillian Hsu, Founding Principal, Latitude High School
- Sara Islas, Humanities Lead, Latitude High School
- Geoffrey Canada, President, Harlem Children's Zone
- Derek Jensen, PSI High Coordinator, Seminole High School
- Neema Avashia, Civics Teacher, John W. McCormack Middle School
- Jacob Hunter, Educator, Purdue Polytechnic High School
- Christian Martinez, Dean of Students, Latitude High School
- Lex Schoenberg, Design-Engineering Teacher, Latitude High School
- Jose Vilson, Math TeacherCoach, NYC Dept. of Education; Founder, EduColor
- Ronni Moore, Instructional Leader/College & Career Readiness Coordinator, Purdue Polytechnic High School North

As you watch, keep the following questions in mind. Feel free to record your thoughts in your course journal.

- Colin Rose, Assistant Superintendent in the Office of Opportunity Gaps in the Boston Public Schools, defines equity as: “having the opportunities and the resources that folks need to succeed at whatever level we're trying to get them to succeed at.” Is this how you would define equity? How else have you heard it defined?

Research on Inequities in US Schools

In the previous video, Derek Jensen from PSI High notes:

"When we look at student achievement data...despite all of the interventions of the last 20 years, and all of the programs, and the software, and the initiatives, we still have a significant and disturbing discipline gap, we still have an academic and achievement gap, a testing gap, we have all of these data points that are still not getting much better and that in some cases are increasing in bad ways. So we have to do something different."

Here is some data about the disparities facing students in the US today. The links below will connect you to articles, peer-reviewed research studies, and reports by government and non-government organizations.

Many US children are facing gaps in the education opportunities they have, particularly students of color and low-income students. They face disparities in [educational funding](#), [teacher experience and access to higher-level academic coursework](#), and [teachers' expectations](#). While having teachers and role models from similar backgrounds can [help students](#), [bias and low expectations](#) are more likely to impact students of color when there is a demographic mismatch between teacher and pupil, which is increasingly common given [demographic trends of teachers and students in the US](#).

The impacts of these opportunity gaps can be seen in many areas, including: disparities in [standardized test scores](#), disparities in [graduation rates](#) for many groups (including [students with disabilities](#) and [low-income students](#)), increased rates of school discipline for [LGBTQ students](#), and [dramatically higher school suspension rates for Black students than White students](#) (starting as early as [preschool](#)).

These are examples of how structural inequalities, such as racism, classism, ableism, and homophobia play out in US schools. We hope this provides some context for why we made this course, and we hope our work together helps you consider how you might work to close some of these opportunity gaps, and build strong relationships cross-culturally in schools, classrooms, and communities. We're excited that you're joining us on this journey.

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- Malik, Rasheed. 2017. ["New Data Reveal 250 Preschoolers Are Suspended or Expelled Every Day."](#) Center for American Progress. November 6.

Educator Mindsets for Equity

Video: Introduction to Educator Mindsets for Equity

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

Instructor Rich Milner introduces a set of educator mindsets that he has developed as a toolkit for helping teachers look at students, communities, and classrooms. He explains how these mindsets can help us see and talk about equity in new ways.

Video: Using Educator Mindsets to Get a Fresh Look at Schools

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

Instructor Justin Reich describes how the educator mindsets can help us look closely at what is happening in classrooms and attend to the needs of marginalized students.

Video: In Conversation: Meet Your Instructors

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In this video, instructors Rich and Justin reflect on what brought them to equity work. Justin talks about how the enrollment of an elective he taught early in his career made him assess how he was reaching students from different backgrounds. Rich describes how reading the Paul Laurence Dunbar poem "[We Wear the Mask](#)" in high school has made him think over the years about the ways students often leave their identities at the door when they come to school.

Readings and Resources for Unit 0

Choose two of the following resources to read, listen, or watch. Skim or scan others that may also be of interest. We invite you to record your thoughts, insights, and questions in your course journal.

Frameworks for Equity and Opportunity

Milner, Richard. 2012. [“Beyond a Test Score: Explaining Opportunity Gaps in Educational Practice.”](#) Journal of Black Studies. Vol. 43, No. 6 (September 2012). This paper describes the framework that underlies this course, focusing on educational practices that may limit opportunities for students (for example, deficit mindsets or cultural conflicts), and offering alternatives.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria. 2006. [2006 Presidential Address: From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in the U.S. Schools.](#) Educational Researcher. Vol. 35, No. 7, pp. 3–12. This is a transcript of a speech Ladson-Billings gave as president of the American Educational Research Association, where she describes her concept of intergenerational education debt in the U.S. as a way to understand disparities in achievement.

Gorski, Paul. 2019. [Avoiding Racial Equity Detours.](#) Educational Leadership. April. Identifies four “detours” that can derail educators who set out to work towards equity in their schools.

Anderson, Melinda. 2014. [When Educators Understand Race and Racism.](#) Teaching Tolerance. November 24. This article succinctly describes the potential pedagogical power of increased racial and cultural competence among educators.

Understanding Key Terms

Structural Inequality: Hayes-Greene, Deena, and Bayard P. Love. 2018. [The Groundwater Approach: Building a Practical Understanding of Structural Racism.](#) Racial Equity Institute. This short guide provides a framework for understanding how structural racism operates across multiple systems, impacting people in many aspects of their lives.

Understanding your own Identity: McIntosh, Peggy. 1990. [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.](#) Independent School. Winter. Accessed on Racial Equity Tools website. Most of us belong to some sort of demographic that benefits from structural inequality. This article describes how the author came to understand the impact of being White on her daily experience, and lists examples. Older, but worth re-considering its impact today. (An interesting [related reading](#)

offers concrete suggestions for people with racial or ethnic privilege to “empty” the knapsack.)

Educational Equity: Robinson, Rodney. 2019. [“What is Equity and Why Do Our Children Deserve it?”](#) TEDxCharlottesville. 2019 Teacher of the Year describes how he understands educational equity, and what is necessary to achieve it.

TeachLab Podcast Episode

With every unit, we have curated a set of resources to extend your learning. Every list will include at least one episode from [TeachLab](#), the podcast of the Teaching Systems Lab.

Reich, Justin. 2020. [Richard Milner](#). TeachLab Podcast. Rich Milner joins Justin Reich in a powerful conversation on how to help educators work for equity for all students.

For further reading on these topics, see our [book list](#) in our end of course resources.

Additional Information About Taking This Course

Taking the Course with Colleagues

We believe the best way to take this course is with other colleagues from your community who understand your context, the students in your school, and the culture of your organization. While you're welcome to take the course by yourself, we encourage you to participate in this learning experience with other members of your school or organization if possible.

If you are taking the course with others in your context, we encourage you to collaborate. For example, a group of educators from the same school might choose to work together on the activities and assignments, and we think that's terrific.

To invite colleagues to take *Becoming a More Equitable Educator* with you, you can use the sample emails or Twitter and Facebook posts in our [Course Invitation Kit](#).

Recruiting some peers to take the course with you will give you an especially powerful learning experience. However, we recognize that not every participant will be taking this with a group of colleagues. In that case, we still encourage you to bring your assignments into your school, however informally. For example, discuss assignments with colleagues, share videos with peers, or talk with a student about ideas from the course. This course is about taking action, and the action step of each assignment can be taken whether or not you're formally taking the course with others.

Form a Learning Circle

One way to work together with a group of colleagues who are interested in the course is to **form a learning circle**.

What is a learning circle?

A learning circle is an in-person discussion group for learners who are all taking *Becoming a More Equitable Educator*.

Why form a learning circle?

This course is designed to encourage you to use what you learn in your context as soon as possible. Your learning circle can provide encouragement, support, and diverse perspectives.

How will my peers benefit from joining a learning circle?

No one knows your school or context better than the people who work there every day, and asking your colleagues to join you in taking this course is a step toward building a cohort of colleagues committed to equitable practices. We encourage you to be bold and reach out (feel free to use the email and social media templates in the facilitator's guide). You might be surprised who responds!

What materials can help us create powerful learning circles?

We've created the Learning Circle Guide for *Becoming a More Equitable Educator* to give you the tools you need to form a learning circle. In this guide are suggested discussion topics and activities for meetings, but we encourage your learning circle to interact with the course in the ways that seem most valuable and productive for your needs. The way in which your learning circle engages with the course is entirely up to you.

For each unit in the course, we'll provide:

- Discussion questions for select videos and readings
- Activities or practices spaces to talk about together
- Ways to collaborate or give feedback on course assignments

Access the Learning Circle Guide as a [Google Doc](#) or a [PDF](#).

Social Media

Social media have created powerful new tools for educators to form informal communities of practice with others around the world. As you proceed through the course, we encourage you to share your learning both in our forums and in whatever online networks you participate in. This is optional and you are not required to join or use these tools. One advantage of participating in these networks is that they allow you to make connections that can persist beyond the

end of this course. They also allow you to share your learning in this course with your local community and other networks.

As always, whenever you share on social media, be thoughtful about how your posts will be received by colleagues and community, and be sure to follow local norms, rules, and guidelines.

Follow the Teaching Systems Lab on Twitter

Those of you who are active on Twitter can follow us [@MoocsTsl](#) and share what you are learning in this course with the [#TSLequity](#) hashtag.

Explore More Equity Conversations on Twitter

There are also several active communities of educators discussing equity on Twitter that we encourage you check out including: Clear the Air ([@ClearTheAirEdu](#) and [#ClearTheAir](#)), Disrupt Texts ([#DisruptTexts](#)), and Edu Color ([@EduColor](#) and [#EduColor](#)).

Our Team

 Justin Reich - Instructor	 H. Richard Milner, IV - Instructor
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Additional Credits

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Unit 1: Seeing and Valuing Individuals through an Equity Lens

Unit 1 Overview

Welcome to Unit 1!

In Unit 1, we're going to explore our first mindset in depth: Equity versus Equality. We will look carefully at how we attend to students as individuals as a starting place for exploring educator mindsets and equity teaching practices.

We're going to launch Unit 1 with our first "practice space": *Jeremy's Journal*. In this digital simulation, you'll meet Jeremy, follow him and his classmates through a week in his English Language Arts classroom, and decide what strategies to use to support everyone's learning. At the end of the practice space, you'll have a tough decision to make about a weekly quiz! Whatever you decide, you'll get to hear and read from other educators about how they handled the situation.

After *Jeremy's Journal*, instructor Rich Milner will share his perspectives on Equity versus Equality, and you'll hear from instructor Justin Reich about how to bring competing mindsets into a better balance. You'll hear from educators at Purdue Polytechnic High School about how they address issues of equity, and then we will revisit the tough decisions in *Jeremy's Journal* through the lens of our educator mindsets. For a final assignment, you will be invited to make a small shift in your own practice to better support a learner like Jeremy in your own classroom.

In Unit 1, you'll find:



Instructional Presentations

- Introduction to Equity vs. Equality Mindsets
- Mindsets in Balance
- Justin and Rich on Opportunity Gaps



Practice Space

- *Jeremy's Journal*
- *Jeremy's Journal* Debrief



Voices from the Field

- Equity Mindset in Practice



Activity and Assignment

- Assignment: Small Changes in Practice to Address Student Needs
- Readings and Resources for Unit 1

Practice Space: Jeremy's Journal

What are Practice Spaces?

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In this video, you will hear from Justin about what practice spaces are and why we think they are a useful tool for teacher learning.

Introduction to Jeremy's Journal



Welcome to your first practice space, *Jeremy's Journal*, which is a scenario in a new application called **TeacherMoments**. TeacherMoments is a web platform for digital teaching simulations, and it works best in the Chrome browser.

Once you begin the practice space below, you should select "Continue Anonymously" and accept the suggested username. As long as you do not log out of TeacherMoments you will be able to refer back to previous responses as you proceed through the course.

Once you are ready, follow the prompts, and respond as best you can!

If you have any trouble, scroll down to TeacherMoments Screencast Walkthrough for a tutorial about using TeacherMoments. If you are still having trouble, email us at equitymit503@gmail.com. Below we list a few troubleshooting tips.

[CLICK HERE TO PLAY JEREMY'S JOURNAL IN A NEW TAB IN YOUR BROWSER](#)

Last, it is very important to have an updated browser, preferably **Chrome** when using TeacherMoments. Here are instructions to 1) [download and install the Chrome browser](#), and 2) instructions to [update a Chrome browser](#).

TeacherMoments Tutorial

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

Troubleshooting TeacherMoments

We appreciate your patience with any technical problems you may encounter. If you have any trouble with TeacherMoments, try the following:

- Make sure you have an updated browser, preferably Chrome ([Instructions to download and install Chrome](#) AND [Instructions to update Chrome](#))
- Refresh your browser and try again
- Hard refresh your browser and try again ([Instructions on how to do hard refresh](#))
- If possible, we recommend going through TeacherMoments on your desktop computer. We've had better luck there than on smartphones.
- Email us if you have any additional questions or problems using Teacher Moments at equitymit503@gmail.com, or post your questions in the Practice Space Troubleshooting Forum

If you forget your password:

- There is no password reset; just create a new account

If Teacher Moments is not loading, we have an [alternative version](#) in Qualtrics which you can use if you cannot get TeacherMoments to work on your device.

Jeremy's Journal Debrief

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

We facilitated the practice space *Jeremy's Journal* with colleagues at Purdue Polytechnic High School in Indianapolis, Indiana. In this video, hear how educators noticed different details in the scenario and the range of decisions they made. Pay

attention to the different kinds of reasoning that educators used to explain their decisions.

Introduction to the Equity versus Equality Mindsets



Video: Equity versus Equality

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

At the Teaching Systems Lab, we have played through the *Jeremy's Journal* practice space with dozens of educators and listened to their decision about whether or not to give Jeremy the quiz. No matter what participants decide to do, we're always interested in the *reasoning* educators use to make their decisions. We find that reasoning in *Jeremy's Journal* often connects with two key themes in an educator's thinking: equity and equality.

In the video above, Rich explains the Equity mindset (where educators consider factors like privilege and opportunity as factors in students' academic performance) and the Equality mindset (where educators view students' successes and failures as a direct result of their effort). He describes how using the Equity mindset can help educators support students' unique needs.

Video: Voices from the Field: Equity Mindset in Practice

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

[Purdue Polytechnic High School](#) (PPHS) was founded to prepare students to succeed in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)

post-secondary programs and careers. The staff are particularly focused on providing their students of color and low income students with what they need to be successful both at school and beyond.

In this video, two PPHS teachers talk about the importance of forming relationships with students to develop a better understanding of what they need to be successful, and to create a culture where students feel cared for by the adults in the building.

As you watch this video, keep the following questions in mind. Write your thoughts in your course journal.

Teacher Ronni Moore describes building relationships with students as “gathering clues as to how to work and get at what [students] need.” Are there currently opportunities in your school to gather these “clues”? If not, do you see any places in your current practice where you could start doing this?

Mindsets in Balance

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In this video, Justin introduces a hypothesis for learners to consider: that the educator mindsets for equity are often out of balance in schools, and that most schools could benefit from more of the Equity, Asset, Aware, and Context-centered mindsets.

Revisiting Jeremy's Journal with an Equity Mindset: Should He Take the Quiz?

Let's return to *Jeremy's Journal* practice space. We find that most participants who play through *Jeremy's Journal* draw on either the Equity or Equality mindsets in explaining their reasoning. Here are some common perspectives and sample responses from educators that have participated in Teaching Systems Lab workshops.

Equity-based reasoning:

An Equity point of view emphasizes that students' ability to perform is often based on what is happening outside of the classroom, and sees that multiple factors play into Jeremy's success. His perceived abilities and efforts might not tell us the whole story of what's going on with him. Some common rationales for Jeremy not to take the quiz are that the assessment should be less about performing under pressure than it is about understanding the material. The goal is for him to learn the material, and it doesn't exactly matter if it's right at that moment.

Equity mindset: "I would tell Jeremy that he does not have to take the test that day. After all, the point is for him to learn the material and it kinda doesn't matter exactly when."

But there are equity rationales for taking the quiz too. Some participants have responded that based on the student work artifacts most students don't get the material, so the teacher should give the quiz, but not grade it. Others think that Jeremy can benefit somewhat from taking the quiz because he and the teacher can get on the same page and plan for what he needs to learn.

Equity mindset: "Jeremy, this quiz is just to help me identify how to instruct you better. If you could take it and do what you know, and circle the

questions that do not make sense, I would love to work with you to help you better understand. This quiz is not a life or death matter so don't worry."

Equity mindset: "I hear you that you are nervous about the quiz today. Let's try this. Why don't you go ahead and take the quiz and if you fail it then we will go over it together and work through the confusion and then you can retake the quiz for partial credit. Does that sound good?"

Participants who bring an Equity mindset to this scenario tend to notice all the things that could be going on in Jeremy's life that could be affecting his academic performance. Some examples include: Jeremy's home life, access to medical care, social embarrassment in the classroom when confused, and maybe a lack of a trusting and honest relationship with the teacher. An Equity mindset doesn't just realize that other factors may be operating in his life, but attempts to learn about them and provide supports and solutions.

Equality-based reasoning:

An Equality point of view emphasizes policies, standards, and equal treatment, with educators accepting that students' achievements are based solely or mostly on their ability or effort. A common Equality rationale for having Jeremy take the quiz is, regardless of the situation, he needs to take the quiz just like everyone else. A goal is to hold him accountable because he was wasting time throughout the week, he was distracting his peers, and he was just coming up with excuses.

Equality mindset: "Take the quiz today. Regardless of the situation, he needs to take the quiz with everyone else. I don't want to embarrass him by explaining why he didn't take it and I still don't know what's been really going on with him."

Final thoughts:

Here's an idea that we'd like you to try on for size: If looking back on your responses, you think you brought Equality-based reasoning to your decision, we'd invite you to try out more Equity-based reasoning.

- Try noticing outside factors that may be inhibiting student learning.
- Try strategies to be flexible and differentiate instruction to meet different student needs.

Of course, it's certainly possible to go overboard. If this is the tenth time Jeremy has skipped a quiz, there is a risk of being flexible to the point of disempowering students. There is an important balance between an Equity mindset and continuing to hold Jeremy's work to high expectations.

The key point to emphasize here is that attention to the individual is really fundamental to equitable teaching. As we move forward in the course, we're going to try to keep diverse individual needs in mind as we think about strengthening equity work in classrooms, schools, and communities. Equity has to do with actively playing a supportive role with Jeremy, and with all of our students.

Unit 1 Assignment: Small Changes in Practice to Address Student Needs

Assignment Overview

One way to practice enacting an Equity mindset is to think about helping one student in your context, which we're referring to as a focal student. As educator Reagan Riddle writes:

"Focal students provide a way to make a daunting task manageable. [They] help teachers develop the discipline of deeply understanding the student's needs, adjusting their teaching to meet those needs, and in doing so, impacting the rest of the classroom as the quality of their teaching rises.

With focal students in mind, teaching is not just executing a well-designed lesson, but it's checking to ensure that the students achieved the objectives of that lesson. In addition, focal students give teachers a critical window into the factors beyond academics that influence learning. Factors such as what motivates a student, the student's belief in themselves, or their perception of whether their teacher believes in them all impact learning. The process of "researching" focal students enables a teacher to build relationships with students who might otherwise have slipped through the cracks. By focusing on focal students, teachers become more effective for all students."

In this assignment, you will plan a small update or modification to something in your practice, like a lesson, by focusing on addressing the needs of a single focal student.

Video: Assignment Inspiration: Small Changes in Practice to Address Student Needs

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In a recent TeachLab podcast, we talked with civics teacher Neema Avashia. She told a story about supporting a reluctant writer in one of her classes, and in an incredible coincidence, her student's name just happened to be Jeremiah— a striking resemblance to the name of our protagonist Jeremy in the practice space, *Jeremy's Journal*! Listen to the modification that Neema made in her practice to help Jeremiah make some great progress as a writer.

Assignment Instructions: Small Changes in Practice to Address Student Needs

1. Pick a focal student. Pick a student who you want to work on supporting better. Perhaps someone who is academically disengaged or who may benefit from additional academic support to help them be successful in school.

Note: if you are not a classroom teacher or don't work directly with students, see alternate ways to do this assignment at the end of the instructions.

2. Reflect on what you know about your focal student.* Use the following questions as inspiration to get started, and jot down some notes about your focal student:

- What does my focal student like? How do I know?
- Why does my focal student engage in learning? What do I think they want to accomplish in life? How can I help them get closer to that goal in my class?

You can also think about what's required for students in your class to be successful:

- In my class, what are the top three things students need to do to be successful?
- Are there any barriers to my focal student's success in my classroom that I could try changing or removing?

3. Brainstorm ways to support your focal student. Set a timer for 5 minutes and brainstorm as many ideas as possible for designing the perfect lesson tailored to your focal student. There are no bad ideas in brainstorming, so write down anything and everything that comes to mind!

If you need some help generating ideas, you can try:

- **Reviewing the mindsets and consequences for the Equity mindset** [in this table](#).
- **Talking to your focal student.** Talk with your focal student about how school is going. Ask how school could be even better for them. Really listen to

what they have to say. It may take some time for them to open up, but students often appreciate the chance to talk about their experiences.

- **Browsing these ideas and resources from other educators working on addressing equity in K-12 education.** Pick one of their ideas or strategies to try.
 - [Universal Design for Learning Guidelines](#) from [CAST](#) suggest ways to design and customize learning experiences (including instructional goals, assessments, methods, and materials) to meet students' individual needs.
 - To learn more about how using a focal student strategy can help educators grow, read [this short resource](#) by Reagan Riddle, which was quoted above.

4. Choose something from your list to try soon. Pick something from your brainstorm list, and think about how you could use that idea for a customized lesson to make an update or modification to your practice. Choose something that seems feasible, that you could try out in the next week or two.

5. Try out your modification. Give it a try! Afterward, make some notes about how it went, anything you would do differently if you tried it again, and whether your modification seemed successful at removing barriers for your focal student, or for any other students. If possible, talk with your focal student afterwards and get their feedback, in addition to other students in your class. Did they like the modification you made? Find it helpful? Do they have suggestions for anything else that would help them?

If you don't work directly with students, you can:

- Choose a focal learner from among a group of adult learners with whom you work
- Use Jeremy from the *Jeremy's Journal* practice space as your focal student, and the week's grammar lesson as your lesson to modify
- Use a student in your family (like a cousin, niece, or nephew) or in your social circle as your focal student

Record this assignment and your reflections on how it went in your course journal. If you'd like, share this assignment with someone in your school or organization. Sharing your work can help deepen your thinking about equity in your context.

**Adapted from Cornelius Minor's book [We Got This: Equity, Access, and the Quest to Be Who Our Students Need Us to Be](#). More examples of his strategies on [listening to](#) and [thinking about](#) students on his publisher's [website](#). See full citation in 1.6.6.*

Peer Feedback in Course-to-Go

Talking to peers about what you are trying and getting feedback is a great way to support your own growth as an educator. Throughout this document, we'll encourage you to share your work on course assignments with a peer or peers in your context. As you prepare to share, consider:

- What were my goals with this activity?
- What did I do or try?
- How did it go? What did I learn? What roadblocks or challenges did I encounter? What, if anything, surprised me?
- What feedback would I like from my peer, or what questions would I like to talk about with him or her?
- How could we keep learning about this topic together?

Assignment References:

- CAST, Inc. 2020. [Universal Design for Learning](#).
- Hammond, Zaretta. 2015. [Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain](#). Corwin Publishing.
- Minor, Cornelius. 2018. [We Got This: Equity, Access, and the Quest to Be Who Our Students Need Us to Be](#). Heinemann Publishing.
- Riddle, Reagan E., [Why a Focal Student Strategy](#). <http://reaganeriddle.weebly.com/>.

Video: In Conversation: Opportunity Gaps

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In this video, Justin and Rich discuss the difference between achievement gaps and opportunity gaps, as well as opportunity-centered teaching.

To learn more about opportunity-centered teaching, we'd encourage you to get a copy of the second edition of Rich's book from Harvard Education Press: *[Start Where You Are, But Don't Stay There: Understanding Diversity, Opportunity Gaps, and Teaching in Today's Classrooms](#)*.

Readings & Resources for Unit 1

Extending your learning for Unit 1

Choose two of the following resources to read, listen to or watch; skim or scan others that may also be of interest. Record your thoughts, insights, and questions in your course journal.

Identity: Who we are shapes how we educate

Pai, Minjung. 2019. [On the Podcast: Scaffolding Instruction with Identity Work with Betina Hsieh and Minjung Pai](#). Heinemann Blog. In this podcast episode, researcher and teacher educator Betina Hsieh discusses the identities educators bring into the classroom, and why understanding them is so crucial to help reach students.

Tatum, Beverly Daniel. 2000. [The Complexity of Identity: "Who Am I?"](#). in Readings for Diversity and Social Justice: An Anthology on Racism, Sexism, Anti-Semitism, Heterosexism, Classism and Ableism. Routledge. In this article Dr. Tatum describes the importance of identity in adolescent development, including the complexities of dominant and subordinate identities across cultures.

For more resources around working with identity in the classroom, see our [Additional Classroom Resources](#).

Equity: Reconsidering how we think about individual learners

Minor, Cornelius. 2019. [How Listening Can Help](#). Heinemann Blog, January 28. Author and educator Cornelius Minor shares key themes from his 2018 book *We Got This: Equity, Access and the Quest to Be Who Our Students Need Us to Be*, including the impact of listening to students and redistributing power in a classroom. *If you enjoyed this blog post and video, this [30 minute podcast](#) episode shares more of the approaches and themes found in Minor's book.*

Mills, Afrika Afeni. 2019. [What Do You Mean When You Say "Those Kids Don't Want to Learn?"](#) Better Lesson, February 12. In this article, Mills describes a series of questions to ask when students are not engaging in class.

CAST, inc. 2020. [Universal Design for Learning](#). A framework intended to improve instruction by considering scientific insights on how people learn, the UDL framework guides the design of instructional goals, assessments, methods, and materials that can be customized and adjusted to meet individual needs.

Wiggins, Grant. 2014. [A Veteran Teacher Turned Coach Shadows 2 Students for 2 Days – a Sobering Lesson Learned](#). Granted, and... ~ thoughts on education blog. October 10. In order to gain empathy, this learning coach shadowed two students, and shares how it made them rethink their practice.

The Myth of Meritocracy

Act.tv. 2019. [Systemic Racism Explained](#). This video describes how systemic, intergenerational inequality can shape our lives, and why hard work and talent leads more easily to success for some than others.

Radiolab. 2017. [Radiolab Presents: On the Media: Busted, America's Poverty Myths](#). WNYC. January 18. In this podcast episode, some common notions about wealth and poverty are re-examined, including questioning the idea that anyone deserves to be wealthy or poor. (Note that this episode highlights segments of a longer podcast series).

Anderson, Melinda. 2017. [Study: Poor Kids Who Believe in Meritocracy Suffer](#). The Atlantic. July 27. This article describes research into the psychological impact of belief in a meritocracy myth among low-income children.

TeachLab Podcast Episode

Reich, Justin. 2020. [Neema Avashia](#). TeachLab Podcast. Neema Avashia, a civics teacher in the Boston Public Schools, speaks to the importance of empowering students to express themselves, teaching difficult topics, and helping students engage in real-world civics lessons.

For further reading on these topics, see our [book list](#) in our end of course resources.

Equity versus Equality Summary Chart

For your reference, here is a chart that summarizes some ideas around the Equity and Equality Mindsets. For each mindset, you'll notice the chart describes three common ideas associated with the mindset (orientations). It also gives an explanation for these orientations, as well as common consequences.

This chart has been adapted from work done by two researchers at the University of Southern California, Robert Filback and Alan Green, to synthesize some current thinking in the field about educator mindsets for equity.

See a [PDF of the Equity versus Equality Mindset Chart here](#).

Jeremy's Journal Facilitator's Guide

One of our goals as a course staff is to make our content as usable and shareable as possible. We want you to be able to share what you learn in this course with colleagues, including our practice spaces. For each practice space, we have created a Facilitator's Guide that will help you run the activity in your context.

[Link to Facilitator's Guide Google Doc](#)

In the Google Doc, click "File" and then select either "Download as" or "Make a Copy..."

[Link to Facilitator's Guide PDF](#)

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Unit 2: Seeing and Valuing Students Through Asset Framing

Unit 2 Overview

In Unit 0, Rich introduced a set of educator mindsets that he and other education researchers have developed as a toolkit for helping teachers look at students, communities, and classrooms. In Unit 2, we will explore the *Asset versus Deficit mindset* and how educators all over the country have helped students see the very best in themselves by shining a light on their strengths. As Neema Avashia from Boston Public Schools puts it, **“I think that's true for every kid; you need to know the places where they shine in order to hold the places where they're not shining yet.”**

As always, we hope your learning is applicable to your role immediately and so we will practice identifying and drawing on students' assets in your own context through the lens of Jeremy again, whom you met in Unit 1, in a practice space called *Coach Wright*.

In Unit 2, you'll find:



Instructional Presentations

- Introduction to Asset vs. Deficit Mindsets
- Asset Framing on the Wrestling Mat
- Incorporating Asset Framing Into Classroom Practices



Practice Space

- *Coach Wright*
- *Coach Wright Debrief*



Voices from the Field

- Asset Framing in Practice



Activity and Assignment

- Activity: Wise Feedback
- Assignment: Roster Audit
- Readings and Resources for Unit 2

Introduction to the Asset vs Deficit Mindsets



Video: Asset versus Deficit

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

Rich explains the Asset mindset—seeing all students as having strengths and being capable of learning—and the Deficit mindset—focusing on student limitations and relying on stereotypes about who can achieve. He describes how using the Asset mindset can help educators hold high expectations for all students, and build on their strengths to help them achieve.

Video: Asset Framing on the Wrestling Mat

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

Justin shares an example of a wrestling coach colleague with a talent for viewing athletes with an asset framing. While you watch, think about a mentor you’ve had in your life that has helped you see the best in yourself.

Video: Voices from the Field: Asset Framing in Practice

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In this video, Seminole High School teacher Angela Daniel describes how she uses asset framing to support her students to thrive. You’ll hear about her work with one student to help him find his brilliance. Even the name of the course she teaches, Reading for Debate, reflects the school’s commitment to asset framing; it was

formerly named Intensive Reading, which stigmatized her students through a deficit lens.

As you watch this video, keep the following questions in mind. Write your thoughts in your course journal.

- Angela describes how she points out her students' individual talents to them: "As soon as I see a nugget of brilliance in them, they get accused of it a lot, and it's reiterated a lot." In what ways do the staff in your context "accuse" students of their strengths, talents, or positive qualities? How often does this happen? Are there some students or groups of students who may not be receiving this kind of communication?
- Angela says, "A deficit mindset is a great way to teach a kid to not try anything outlandish, or creative, or new." In your context, can you think of an example of students experiencing deficit framing? If so, what were the consequences on their attitudes or experiences in school?

Activity: Wise Feedback

Video: Incorporating Asset Framing Into Classroom Practices

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

So now that we're aware of asset framing, how do we communicate it in our actions in the classroom? Wise Feedback is something teachers can use to incorporate asset framing into practice. Justin explains the components of Wise Feedback and shares some examples of how he uses this technique in the classes he teaches at MIT.

Tips for Giving Wise Feedback

When to give Wise Feedback:

- **You don't need to do this for every piece of student work.** Pick a few important assignments or classroom activities where critical feedback will be the most impactful. Then, budget time for providing that feedback into your lesson plan.

- **Avoid combining Wise Feedback and grades.** Wise Feedback works best when you're giving students feedback during a lesson, unit, or assignment (formative feedback), rather than at the end of the lesson, unit, or assignment (summative feedback). Providing Wise Feedback on graded work can be ineffective because students see the grade as the "real" assessment and ignore the feedback.

You can give Wise Feedback in a variety of settings and to individuals or groups of students. You can give Wise Feedback in a variety of contexts: informally in the classroom, in individual conferences with students, in written feedback, and so on. You can also try it one-on-one with students, with small groups of students who are working together, or with a whole class.

Give ambitious feedback to all students. Sometimes out of a sense of care for students who are struggling, teachers will overly praise mediocre work or only suggest easy improvements. This will not help students in the long run, and can be a manifestation of bias. Make sure you're holding students to a high standard and that your feedback asks them to do challenging work.

Try Wise Feedback with any age, but especially consider it for adolescents. This technique can be especially appropriate for adolescents, because they are at a developmental point where they're deciding which authority figures and institutions they can trust (Yeager, 2014). But educators shouldn't feel limited by the age of their students, whether younger or older than adolescents. We think this feedback can benefit students of all ages.

References:

Yeager, David Scott, et. al. 2014. [Breaking the Cycle of Mistrust: Wise Interventions to Provide](#)

Video: Wise Feedback in Practice

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

Neema Avashia, a Civics teacher in the Boston Public Schools, discusses using Wise Feedback in the classroom.

Wise Feedback Activity Instructions

Here, you will have a chance to practice using asset framing while giving Wise Feedback.

1. **Choose a student to focus on for this activity.** You can use the same focal student you used in Unit 1 or choose someone new. Think about where they have room for growth or what they struggle with in school, and where they excel.
2. **Pick a piece of student work to give feedback on.** Choose something that you think the student would benefit from receiving feedback on, like a skill they've been working on in class, a piece of homework, or an assignment like a rough draft, lab report, research project, etc.
3. **Brainstorm some of your students' assets.** Push yourself to think of several assets or strengths for your focal student. They could be academic strengths, or non-academic strengths with academic applications.
4. **Practice writing Wise Feedback.** Pick at least one asset that you identified for your student and use it to write Wise Feedback for the assignment you chose.

Your feedback will have three parts:

- A description of the feedback you're giving ("I have some suggestions for how to improve your slide show for the class presentation you're making next week to teach the class about your research project.")
- A statement of your high standards for their work ("The slides need to include the three main components of the research project, and right now they only have two components.")
- An assurance in your belief in the student based on their assets ("I know making slideshows is a new medium for us. But your research skills are really

strong, and I think you'll be able to translate them into a visual presentation.")

We created a Wise Feedback template which you can access in [Google Docs](#) or [pdf](#) format. To edit the Google Doc template, click "File" and select "Make a copy" or "Download as."

Record this assignment and your reflections on how it went in your course journal. If you'd like, share this assignment with someone in your school or organization. Sharing your work can help deepen your thinking about equity in your context.

References:

Cohen, Geoffrey L, et. al. 1998. [The Mentor's Dilemma: Providing Critical Feedback Across the Racial Divide](#). *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. 1302-1318.

Intervention Central. [How to Help Students Accept Constructive Criticism: 'Wise' Feedback](#). [Wise Framing of Feedback](#).

Yeager, David Scott, et. al. 2014. [Breaking the Cycle of Mistrust: Wise Interventions to Provide](#)

[Critical Feedback Across the Racial Divide](#). *Journal of Experimental Psychology*. 143 (2): 804 – 824.

Practice Space: Coach Wright

Introduction to Coach Wright



In this practice space, you play the role of a school literacy coach supporting an English language arts (ELA) teacher and her students. In the simulation, you will be provided with background information about the class while observing Jeremy, the student you met in the Unit 1 practice space *Jeremy's Journal*. Drawing on what you have learned in this unit about asset framing, you will be asked to make decisions about how to support and coach the ELA teacher after each school day.

If you have any trouble, scroll down to Troubleshooting TeacherMoments, post your questions in the Practice Space Troubleshooting Forum, or email us at equitymit503@gmail.com. Below we list a few troubleshooting tips.

[CLICK HERE TO PLAY COACH WRIGHT IN A NEW TAB IN YOUR BROWSER](#)

Last, it is very important to have an updated browser, preferably **Chrome** when using TeacherMoments. Here are instructions to 1) [download and install](#) the Chrome browser, and 2) instructions to [update a Chrome browser](#).

Troubleshooting TeacherMoments

We appreciate your patience with any technical problems you may encounter. If you have any trouble with TeacherMoments, try the following:

- Make sure you have an updated browser, preferably Chrome ([Instructions to download and install Chrome](#) AND [Instructions to update Chrome](#))
- Refresh your browser and try again
- Hard refresh your browser and try again ([Instructions on how to do hard refresh](#))

- If possible, we recommend going through TeacherMoments on your desktop computer. We've had better luck there than on smart phones.
- Email us if you have any additional questions or problems using TeacherMoments at equitymit503@gmail.com, or post your questions in the Practice Space Troubleshooting Forum

If you forget your password:

- There is no password reset; just create a new account

If TeacherMoments is not loading, we have an [alternative version](#) in Qualtrics which you can use if you cannot get TeacherMoments to work on your device.

Video: Debrief - Coach Wright

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

We facilitated the practice space *Coach Wright* with colleagues at Purdue Polytechnic High School in Indianapolis, Indiana. In this video, listen to how educators noticed different details in the scenario and the range of decisions they made. Pay attention to the different kinds of reasoning that educators used to explain their decisions.

Our Final Thoughts on Applying Asset and Deficit Mindsets in Context

Typically, we see educators using two kinds of reasoning in their choices with the *Coach Wright* practice space. Here are some common perspectives that draw on Asset and Deficit-based reasoning, along with some sample responses demonstrating those perspectives from educators that have participated in Teaching Systems Lab workshops.

Deficit-based reasoning:

Deficit framing takes school standards around curriculum and behavior as the norm, and teachers often find themselves particularly attentive to ways that students fall short of those norms. A Deficit point-of-view favors classroom

conformity and disciplinary action over finding alternative ways to encourage and challenge all students. Teachers operating from this perspective perceive students from certain backgrounds as less capable, especially when students break traditional school “rules”, regardless of the reason(s) underlying their actions.

Deficit mindset: “You need to follow the school policy and give him a referral. If you don't, he will think he can always get away with this. Coach is protecting him because he doesn't want him to miss the game.”

Asset-based reasoning:

An Asset-based mindset emphasizes that all students have the capacity to thrive in experiencing a challenging curriculum, regardless of their backgrounds and the class content. This mindset frames students in a positive light, drawing upon their unique strengths, regardless of whether they align with traditionally expected behaviors or not. Ultimately, teachers who are more reflective can help reduce the number of students, particularly students of color, subject to disciplinary actions.

Asset mindset: “What is more important, [to] discipline a child (possibly discouraging them) because of a policy, or striving to understand and encourage a student so they can be successful? We can see the rest of the class time, Jeremy did complete his work without too much distraction, just like Coach had predicted. Maybe I would suggest that Ms. Porter has lunch with Coach sometime so that she could better understand Jeremy.”

An Asset-based mindset suggests that Jeremy should not receive a referral; instead, it recognizes his potential, skills and interests in and outside of the classroom, and seeks to build that confidence rather than start Jeremy on a bad track. Asset-based teaching leverages Jeremy’s strengths and passions to encourage Jeremy to do the work and build his confidence. An Asset mindset both realizes that there are more sustainable and supportive ways to encourage Jeremy based on who he is as a young person, and uses this strategy to maintain a rigorous curriculum.

Even when teachers use disciplinary consequences--especially when teachers use disciplinary consequences--Asset framing can still be a crucial part of rebuilding trust and rapport. In some circumstances, it may be necessary to carry through with an action like writing a referral for Jeremy—maybe he’s repeatedly out wandering, maybe it’s unsafe for him to be out, maybe the school leadership is very strict with faculty about these policies. During these moments of conflict, it can be

especially important to continue asking yourself: “What is great and special about this young person, and how can we build on that moving forward?”

Final thoughts: Shifting towards Asset framing

Like Equity and Equality mindsets, we encourage you to test the hypothesis that Asset and Deficit mindsets are out of balance in schools. There can be too much emphasis on conformity, assimilation, and assumptions that students aren’t capable of rigorous work. Conversely, there is not enough emphasis on identifying student strengths and building on them, even in challenging interactions.

An Asset mindset actively puts students’ uniqueness at the center of interactions. The best way to turn this thinking into action is by getting to know your students as individuals, like Coach Wright does with Jeremy.

If looking back on your responses, you think you brought a Deficit-based reasoning to your decision, we’d invite you to try on more Asset-based reasoning:

- **Try noticing how you can put students’ uniqueness at the center of your interactions**
- **Use these strategies to be more flexible, and differentiate instruction and discipline to meet different student needs**

Unit 2 Assignment: Roster Audit

Video: Assignment Inspiration: Leveraging Student Strengths and Tools for Seeing Strengths

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

As you've learned in this unit, using an Asset mindset helps educators form learning partnerships with students in order to ensure that students experience a meaningful and challenging curriculum. One important step in creating learning partnerships is being able to identify our students' strengths. In the Unit Two Assignment, you will have a chance to practice doing a roster audit, a systematic way of looking at your students with the goal of naming their strengths and assets.

In a recent [TeachLab podcast](#), Professor Ilana Horn from Vanderbilt University describes how she used a roster audit to identify student strengths when she was an elementary school math teacher. Listen to her description of her roster audit, then check out Dr. Tara Yosso's framework around cultural capital below (which might help us recognize a range of strengths in students), and then click on to the next page to do your own roster audit.

Six Forms of Cultural Capital Framework

Dr. Tara Yosso, a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, provides a helpful tool for seeing students' strengths. She **identified six forms of cultural capital that Communities of Color possess—or what she refers to as *Community Cultural Wealth***—that can go unrecognized by the dominant culture:

1. **Aspirational capital:** students' hopes and dreams, their resiliency, even when facing real and perceived barriers
2. **Linguistic capital:** language and communication skills, especially the intellectual and social skills that come from communicating in more than one language or style
3. **Familial capital:** a sense of community history, pride in one's culture and traditions, and caring connections fostered within family networks, whether immediate or extended family, and social organizations (sports, school, religious gatherings and other social community settings)
4. **Social capital:** networks of people and community resources that can provide logistical and emotional support as students navigate the K-12

system, from learning about norms and expectations in their school, to getting help filling out college applications or scholarship forms

5. **Navigational capital:** students' ability to move through different social institutions, especially ones that can be hostile to Students of Color
6. **Resistance capital:** knowledge and skills that come from opposing and challenging racist and oppressive structures

Whether these types of assets are new or familiar to you, take a moment to reflect on them. Does your school or context regularly recognize these assets in its students? What about in your own practice? How could you start looking for these types of assets in your students going forward?

References:

Yosso, Tara J. 2005. "Whose cultural capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8 (1): 69-91.

Assignment: Roster Audit

Here you will have a chance to practice doing a roster audit, a survey of your students with the goal of naming their strengths and assets. We have also provided an option for learners who are not classroom teachers to participate in this assignment. We encourage you to record your thoughts in your course journal.

Instructions:

1. **Pick a class roster to review for this activity.** If you have multiple classes, we recommend focusing on one class.
 - a. **Non-classroom option:** Create an unofficial roster by listing: students you support (for librarians, reading coaches, etc.), adults you work with or support (for administrators, instructional coaches, district employees, etc.), or a group of school-age children in your life (for parents, education students, non-profit employees, etc.). Try to include 10-15 people on your list.
2. **Try to identify one strength for every name on your roster.**
 - a. For each student, write down at least one thing you know about them as a person. Try to see if you can identify something that the student has shared with you about themselves. Example: *Jules loves their dog, and wants to be a vet.*

- b. Next, go back and add a strength for each student. Strengths can come from academic or non-academic areas. Example: *Jules is compassionate and works to make sure everyone in a group participates* or *Jared loves teaching other students about topics he's interested in*. If there are some names where you are struggling, feel free to come back to them.
3. **Reflect on the strengths you identified.** Were there any patterns there? Did you identify any strengths that would fall under Dr. Yosso's six categories of cultural capital?
4. **Reflect on any names where you struggled or couldn't identify a strength.** Are there any patterns? Does this suggest any gaps in knowledge or awareness you may have? For example, maybe you didn't list any strengths for the quieter students, students who disrupt class more often, or students who are newer to your school.
5. **Set a goal for learning more about your students' strengths.** As Dr. Ilana Horn says, "If you don't have a connection with a child over something that is good about them, something that you like about them, something that you can celebrate about them, you're not going to help them grow." As a next step, she recommends having a conversation with students for whom you couldn't identify a strength.
 - a. Make a list of students whose strengths you need to learn about. Identify a time over the next 1-2 weeks to have a conversation with each of them. Try to find an opportunity during your typical routine, such as during class time or during a transition like walking students to lunch. Put a note in your calendar, planner, or whatever system you use for reminders!
 - b. To learn even more about your students' strengths, plan a whole class discussion or an activity where you hear from each student. After all, they are the experts on themselves!

For inspiration, look at these [questions to get to know your students and their strengths](#). These are adapted from a [list](#) put together by Tricia Ebarvia, teacher and co-founder of #DisruptTexts on Twitter, as part of a larger "[get to know you](#)" project. You can share the whole list with students, ask them to interview each other, ask students to draw questions from a hat, or even make this into a game by writing the questions on Jenga blocks as Ebarvia did.

Reflect about your Roster Audit in your course journal. In your entry, reflect on at least one of the following:

- Any challenges or surprises in doing your roster audit.
- How you learned more about your students' assets (or how you plan to).
- Thoughts about leveraging what you know about student assets to help engage them in meaningfully challenging work.
- If you were able to have a conversation with a student to learn about a strength, reflect on how that went.
- If you did an activity with your whole class to learn about their strengths, reflect on how that went.

If you'd like, share this assignment with someone in your school or organization. Sharing your work can help deepen your thinking about equity in your context.

References:

@triciaebarvia. "Thanks for your patience, all! Here are the ?s I used: docs.google.com/document/d/1gh... No matter what ?s you end up with, pls see thread immediately above this one. And TY to all who suggested numbering the blocks & corresponding list of questions for Ss for greatest flexibility. :)" *Twitter*, 30 Jul. 2019, 6:37 p.m., <https://twitter.com/triciaebarvia/status/1156332969591791616>.

Readings and Resources Unit 2

Extending your Learning for Unit 2

Choose two of the following resources to read, listen to or watch; skim or scan others that may also be of interest.

Record your thoughts, insights, and questions in your course journal.

Using an assets-based approach with individuals

- Hammond, Zaretta. 2015. [Closing Learning Gaps through the Power of Culturally Responsive Teaching](#). Corwin Connect. February 24. In this article, Hammond describes the power of building a learning partnership with students, along with other culturally responsive strategies.
- Shorters, Trabian. 2018. [The Power of Asset Framing: A Conversation with Trabian Shorters](#). Skillman Foundation. August 20. In this short video, Shorters shares his definition of asset framing and the importance of acknowledging students' aspiration before going into their greatest challenges.
- White, Byron P. 2016. [Beyond a Deficit View](#). Inside Higher Ed. April 19. Asks higher education stakeholders to reconsider describing students through deficits.

Affirming culture and identity as assets in the classroom

- Donald, Brooke. 2016. [Stanford Study Suggests Academic Benefits to Ethnic Studies Courses](#). Stanford News. January 12. A recent study suggests positive academic impact from enrollment in courses focused on culture, race and identity.
- Ladson-Billings, Gloria. [Successful Teachers of African American Children](#). In this short video, Ladson-Billings describes three aspects of successfully teaching African American children (focus on learning, cultural competence and critical consciousness), which can be applied to many demographic groups.
- Lenz, Laura. 2016. [A Strength-Based Approach to Teaching English Learners](#). Cult of Pedagogy. September 11. Offers strategies for identifying strengths to engage emerging bilingual students.
- Flores, Tylia. 2019. [How We Can Improve Disability Inclusion in Schools](#). The Mighty. The author, who has Cerebral Palsy, offers several suggestions to

include disability awareness in the curriculum and describes the impact it could have on students with and without disabilities.

- Keenan, Harper B. 2019. [The Power of Representation and Inclusive Curriculum](#). This podcast/blog post discusses “unscripting gender” in schools and ways to make schools more affirming for students (and educators) that don’t conform to a strict gender binary.
- Dakota Wicohan. 2016. [Mni Sóta Maȋoce: The Dakota Homelands Curriculum](#). This social studies curriculum was designed by a team of Dakota* scholars for 6th graders across the U.S. state of Minnesota. In it students will learn about Dakota culture and values, and consider their “individual, family and community connections to place.”
- Love, Bettina. 2016. [Dr. Bettina Love on Cultural Memory in Youth, Creativity and Hip Hop](#). This short video gives examples of ways educators can work to recognize and unlock cultural strengths in African American students.

TeachLab Podcast Episode:

- Reich, Justin. 2020. [Ilana Horn](#). TeachLab Podcast. Dr. Ilana Horn, a researcher and teacher educator at Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College, discusses finding strengths in every student, listening more closely to student thinking, and finding ways to shift the curriculum from “school math” to the kind of math that’s both more engaging to students and closer to what real mathematicians do.

For further reading on these topics, see our [book list](#) in our end of course resources.

*The Dakota are one of 572+ federally recognized Indigenous tribes in the United States.

Asset versus Deficit Summary Chart

Here is a chart that summarizes some ideas around the Asset and Deficit mindsets. For each mindset, you'll notice the chart describes three common ideas associated with the mindset (orientations). It also gives an explanation for these orientations, as well as common consequences.

This chart has been adapted from work done by two researchers at the University of Southern California, Robert Fillback and Alan Green, to synthesize some current thinking in the field about educator mindsets for equity.

See a [PDF of the Asset versus Deficit Mindset Chart here](#).

Coach Wright Facilitator's Guide

One of our goals as a course staff is to make our content as usable and shareable as possible. We want you to be able to share what you learn in this course with colleagues, including our practice spaces. For each practice space, we have created a Facilitator's Guide that will help you run the activity in your context.

[Link to Facilitator's Guide Google Doc](#)

In the Google Doc, click "File" and then select either "Download as" or "Make a Copy..."

[Link to Facilitator's Guide PDF](#)

Share and Adapt Course Content: Can I really use this at work? Our [Creative Commons license](#) is designed for access; we encourage you to use, adapt, remix and share these tools, with attribution, in your networks.

Unit 3: Seeing and Valuing Differences through Challenging Conversations

Welcome to Unit 3!

In Unit 3, we look into the framework of the Aware versus Avoidant mindsets. Rich will explain why it's so important to talk about race, even though it can be an emotionally fraught subject. You will hear from educators at Boston Public Schools and PSI High (a program within Seminole High School) about the ways they put the Aware mindset into practice at the administrative and classroom level. Through the activity and assignment, you will be equipped with tools and exercises that help you continue to build, strengthen, and reflect about your current environment, in concert with other educators, as it pertains to race and other taboo topics.

In Unit 3, you'll find:



Instructional Presentations

- Introduction to Aware vs. Avoidant Mindsets
- Planning for Talking and Listening About Identity



Practice Space

- *Roster Justice*
- *Roster Justice Debrief*



Voices from the Field

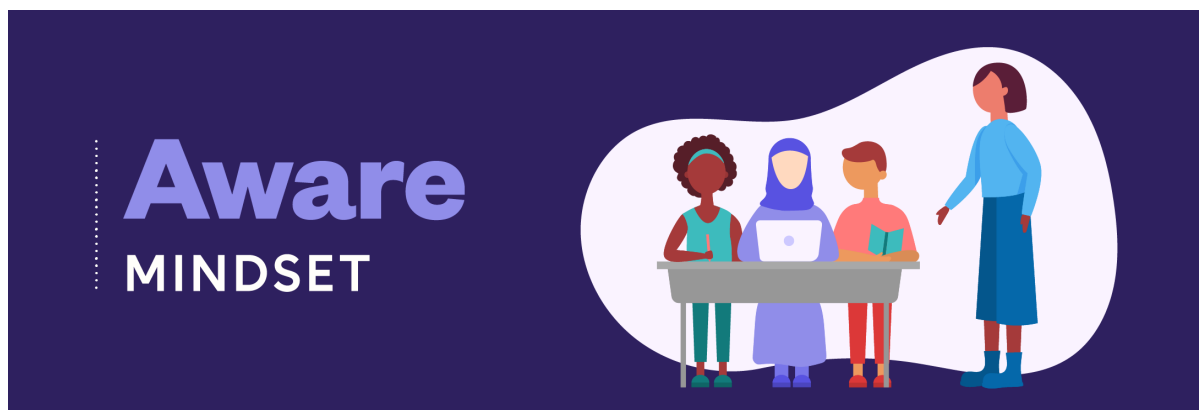
- Impact of the Aware Mindset
- Practicing the Aware Mindset



Activity and Assignment

- Activity: Left-Hand Column Case
- Assignment: Practicing Challenging Conversations
- Readings and Resources for Unit 3

Introduction to the Aware versus Avoidant Mindsets



Video: Aware versus Avoidant Mindsets

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

Rich describes the ways race impacts the operation of schools and the experiences of individual students. He explains why it is so important to talk about race, even though it can be an emotionally charged subject, and gives us context for the importance of the Aware versus Avoidant mindset.

Video: Voices From The Field: Impact of the Aware Mindset

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In this video, you'll see how the Aware mindset impacts the work of two Boston Public School educators.

Colin Rose, the Assistant Superintendent in the [Office of Opportunity Gaps](#) at Boston Public Schools, explains how intentional conversations about racial equity are at the center of his approach to addressing opportunity gaps at the district and school levels. His innovative program, Excellence for All, provides rigorous, culturally relevant academics and enrichment opportunities to students. (Note: you'll hear Colin mention "CLSP" which stands for [Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices](#).) The program also has coaches who work with teachers to develop their capacity, including a strong racial equity lens or mindset.

Neema Avashia, a middle school civics teacher at the McCormick Middle School in Dorchester, MA, talks about the obligation she feels to help students make sense of the world around them, including race and how race impacts their lives.

Video: Planning for Talking and Listening About Identity

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

Justin gives some advice about having conversations about identity, especially race, in preparation for this unit's assignment on listening skills.

Activity: Left Hand-Column Case

Introduction to the Left-Hand Column Case- - A Tool for Reflecting on Difficult Conversations

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

Effective listening is an important skill when working collaboratively. In this video from the TSL course Launching Innovation in Schools, [Professor Peter Senge](#), a Senior Lecturer in Leadership and Sustainability at the MIT Sloan School of Management, talks us through how to chart what was said in a conversation versus what someone was thinking and feeling.

Left-Hand Column Case

In this activity, you will use the Left-Hand Column Case tool to reflect on a challenging conversation. This tool can help us see where we are making assumptions about others in the conversation, and, where we need to be more clear and direct in our communication. Often in challenging conversations, there are things that we are thinking but do not say that end up driving the conversation.

Reflecting on this “invisible” part of the conversation can help us think about challenging conversations with colleagues, students, and families. This is especially helpful when talking about taboo topics like race. Reflection allows space for listening to the other person, which can lead to more productive, open, caring, and honest conversations in the future.

Instructions:

1. **Choose a conversation to reflect on.** Think about a conversation you’ve had about student demographics, such as race, gender, disability, etc., in the context of educational decision-making, the daily lives of students, or how different students access and perform in school. Or, maybe a conversation where student demographics could have come up, but didn’t. This conversation could be between you and one other person or large group.

We recommend using this [template](#). (You can see an example Left-Hand Column Case using the template [here](#).)

2. In the template, **fill in the right-hand “What was said” column** with the dialogue from your conversation. (If you’re not using the template, make a vertical line down the center of a piece of paper, dividing the paper into two columns. Label the right-hand side “What was said.”) This should be what a recording device in the room would pick up.

3. **Fill in the left-hand “What I was thinking” column with what you thought and felt in the conversation, but didn’t actually say.** (If you’re not using the template, label the left side of the paper “What I was thinking.”)
4. **Now reflect!** How did the left column drive the dialogue of the conversation? Did it cause you to jump to any conclusions? What would you do differently now that you’ve analyzed this conversation?
5. **Rewrite the dialogue** so that it brings important left-hand column thinking to the surface.

While this is a reflective activity and can stay private, you may also benefit from sharing this activity with a colleague. Talk them through what you did in the activity, including any insights you had. Ask them about what they would have done differently and if they think your new dialogue is an improvement.

Record this assignment and your reflections on how it went in your course journal. If you’d like, share this assignment with someone in your school or organization. Sharing your work can help deepen your thinking about equity in your context.

Practice Space: Roster Justice



In this third practice space, ***Roster Justice***, you will have the opportunity to employ an Aware mindset through a conversation with the school principal.

If you have any trouble, scroll down to Troubleshooting TeacherMoments, post your questions in the Practice Space Troubleshooting Forum, or email us at equitymit503@gmail.com. Below we list a few troubleshooting tips.

[CLICK HERE TO PLAY ROSTER JUSTICE IN A NEW TAB IN YOUR BROWSER](#)

Last, it is very important to have an updated browser, preferably **Chrome** when using TeacherMoments. Here are instructions to 1) [download and install](#) the Chrome browser, and 2) instructions to [update a Chrome browser](#).

Troubleshooting TeacherMoments

Note: This is the first time we are using TeacherMoments in a MOOC. We appreciate your patience with any technical problems you may encounter. If you have any trouble with TeacherMoments, try the following:

- Make sure you have an updated browser, preferably Chrome ([Instructions to download and install Chrome](#) AND [Instructions to update Chrome](#))
- Refresh your browser and try again
- Hard refresh your browser and try again ([Instructions on how to do hard refresh](#))
- If possible, we recommend going through TeacherMoments on your desktop computer. We've had better luck there than on smart phones.

- Email us if you have any additional questions or problems using TeacherMoments at equitymit503@gmail.com, or post your questions in the Practice Space Troubleshooting Forum

If you forget your password:

- There is no password reset; just create a new account

If TeacherMoments is not loading, we have an [alternative version](#) in Qualtrics which you can use if you cannot get TeacherMoments to work on your device.

Roster Justice Debrief**[Watch video on YouTube](#)**

We facilitated *Roster Justice* with educators from PSI High at Seminole High School in Sanford, Florida. Consider how they think about the role of race and identity in conversations about school practices. After you watch the video, share your thoughts in the space below, and post your reflections on *Roster Justice* in the discussion forums.

Based on what you heard from educators in this video, would you have changed anything about what you said to Mr. Holl in *Roster Justice*? What would you have changed? You may want to write some thoughts in your course journal.

Our Final Thoughts on Applying Aware and Avoidant Mindsets in Context Mindsets in Context

In our last two practice spaces, you role-played as a person in a position of relative authority: as Jeremy's teacher or as Ms. Porter's coach. In *Roster Justice*, you were on the other side of a power imbalance, as a teacher speaking to a school leader.

Practice spaces are places to imagine a range of responses to challenging situations. Our hope is that many teachers would choose an Aware approach to the conversation with Mr. Holl: directly confronting the racial and gender inequities unfolding and pressing for strategies that can address these issues. But we also know that circumstances are different for every person. A teacher with

probationary status may make different choices than a teacher with tenure. A teacher with a working spouse might be more willing to risk confrontation than a teacher who's the sole breadwinner for their family. Our identities and demographic characteristics—our race, gender, sexuality, and so on—might inform how we approach a conversation with the principal.

As we saw in the conversation at PSI High, there are a range of strategies that a teacher could try: directly confronting the principal about racial and gender inequities, focusing on a shared commitment to “Women in STEM,” avoiding race and talking about class size imbalance, accepting the offer of a teaching assistant, or demanding greater attention to underlying inequalities. Part of the point of a practice space is to imagine this range of choices, rehearse for what you think you might really do in this kind of situation, and then reflect back and ask yourself, “What kind of teacher do I want to be in this moment?”

When confronted with issues of race, gender, and equity, the lenses of Avoidant- or Aware-based reasoning can help you reflect on possible strategies.

Avoidant-based reasoning:

An Avoidant-focused mindset favors the idea that student demographics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, race, age, disability) can be overlooked to treat everyone fairly over recognizing that students experience school differently given their backgrounds. This perspective fails to see the significance in finding a solution to the roster imbalances that addresses the racial and gender segregation: “That would be great! I would love to have an extra pair of hands. In order to be more diverse in the classes.” Accepting a solution that focuses on convenience (simply adding a TA), or the number of students in the class without addressing underlying differences in racial/ ethnic, and gender representation in the class implies that students' background is unrelated to academic opportunity. While most teachers care about their students' academic success, this mindset perpetuates racial and gender identities as taboo topics.

Avoidant mindset: “Since Ms. Nelson is teaching periods 5 and 6, why don't we switch those blocks if that's ok with her? I can be in charge of talking to her about it if you think that's appropriate.”

“A teaching assistant would be incredibly helpful, Mr. Holl. I think this is a great idea and would solve the roster issues I've brought up today.”

Aware-based reasoning:

An Aware-based mindset acknowledges the differences and roles that student demographics (gender, race, disability) play in the classroom and school at large. In this case, relying on students to choose their elective class, and assuming they are knowledgeable about their options, doesn't properly assess their interest, nor does it reflect their potential. Some common rationales for pushing the roster to be more representative of student potential is that students are influenced by what they have already been exposed to, or have not been exposed to, in computer science (CS). Understanding and articulating that statistically, White and Asian males have more exposure and access to a subject like CS, and are significantly more represented in the CS workforce, is one way to employ an Aware mindset in *Roster Justice*.

Aware mindset: "Educating our students a bit more around what each of these courses entails might create a more natural balance in the demographic make-up of each class with the added bonus of equalizing the class sizes. What do you think? I'd be happy to take on the task of presenting our students with a bit more information about each of these classes."

An Aware-based mindset also understands that curricular and policy decisions must reflect structural inequities. This requires honest conversations with school leaders. This also suggests that navigating power imbalances is fundamental to a successful conversation about race, gender, and ability, despite Mr. Holl's discomfort or unwillingness to acknowledge the severity of segregated classes. Ultimately an Aware rationale advocates for students who wouldn't have otherwise been introduced to CS: Black and Latinx students, girls of all races/ethnicities, and IEP students. An Aware mindset prioritizes the opportunity of exposing these students to CS, teaching them how CS can relate to their world and their future. Opening the minds of all students can't happen without finding ways to discuss race, gender, and other identities in decision and policy making.

Aware mindset: "I do understand that it is complicated because we have a lot of students, but this situation is not out of our control: we create the schedule, it was not given to us. We have and should have control over that, especially if it is heavily closing opportunities for students, and for very specific groups of students. Having a teaching assistant for the larger class would mitigate the issue you have created, but it won't solve the base issue."

Final thoughts: Shifting towards an Aware mindset

As we've seen with the other mindsets, there is a stark imbalance between an Aware and Avoidant mindset in schools. We invite you to try out more aware-based reasoning:

- **Notice moments where you have the power to advocate for underrepresented students when making structural decisions; see how these efforts can positively influence academic achievement.**
- **Use these strategies to be more aware about how these patterns show up in your own context, and create solutions that center race and gender.**

It is easy to overlook things such as segregated school because students “made their own decisions”, or “that’s just how things are.” Too often, decisions made by school leaders that reflect racial disparities are either gone unnoticed, not prioritized, or ignored. There is a common emphasis on being politically correct, not questioning authority, and avoiding tension in the workplace by ignoring race and gender inequalities. Of course, there are ways to go overboard with this that could be less than conducive to a positive work environment, such as with stereotyping.

However, an Aware mindset not only acknowledges these patterns, but presents viable solutions that address these inequities. If looking back on your responses, you think your conversation and observations demonstrated more of an Avoidant-focused reasoning, we invite you to try on more Aware-based reasoning.

Video: Voices from the Field: Practicing the Aware Mindset

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In this video, you'll hear about the impact of the Aware mindset at Seminole High School and PSI High in Sanford, FL.

You'll hear how a 1970 lawsuit from the United States Justice Department forced the district to racially integrate its schools and sparked frank conversations about race and opportunity. In addition, you'll hear from two educators from PSI High talk about the importance of being able to speak openly about the impacts of systemic

racism, and how a shared understanding among the staff allows them to operate with Aware thinking.

Unit 3 Assignment: Practicing Challenging Conversations

In this assignment, we invite you to practice having a conversation about race, structural inequality, and other taboo topics with a colleague.

You are going to use an Aware lens to brainstorm a list of questions you currently have about your practice, school or context; then, after some guided reflection, you will choose someone with whom to have a conversation about your question.

Instructions:

Step 1: Brainstorm Questions

In this step you're going to brainstorm questions to potentially ask a colleague for this assignment. Here are some areas where you might have questions:

- **Your practice:** How are you thinking about students' various identities in your current practice? Are there some student identities you have questions about? Thinking back on your activities and assignments so far in the course, did you acknowledge the role student identities play in your responses and, if so, how? Example: *In my roster audit I noticed I had more trouble naming strengths for some of the boys in my class, including several Black boys. I wonder how effectively I'm building relationships with these students?*
- **Yourself in this work:** Do you have any questions/concerns about how your own various identities might be sources of connections (or disconnections) with students? Example: *I'm from a middle-class background - I wonder if I have areas of unawareness around how I'm teaching students from low-income, blue-collar families?*
- **Your school or context:** How are issues of identity showing up in your school? Are there obvious disparities? Are they discussed? Example: *We just had an influx of students from Southeast Asia in our school. I wonder how we're making them feel culturally represented in our curriculum?*
- **If you're feeling stuck:** consider skipping ahead to the [Readings and Resources](#) section, where you'll find different approaches to trying on an Aware mindset.

Grab some sticky notes and set a timer for 10 minutes and start brainstorming. Aim for quantity of ideas/questions over quality.

After you're done brainstorming, look at your list of questions. Is there a logical way to organize them? Are there repeats? Are there a few questions you are especially interested in? Organize your questions, then choose a few questions to keep considering.

- **From assumptions to inquiry:** Do a quick sweep: do any of the questions contain assumptions? Can you change those to wondering? For example, "Why are all my girls so unmotivated to do AP chemistry?" could become "I wonder what's going on with girls in chemistry? What are their experiences like?"

Step 2: Identify a colleague or small group that you could engage around these questions.

Consider some of the following kinds of people to invite into a conversation:

- Find a single colleague that you trust.
- Choose a colleague that you think might be an ally around equity work. For example, it could be someone who seems particularly thoughtful about working with LGBTQ kids or English language learners, or is skilled at connecting with parents.
- Find a larger group to talk to (perhaps a student group, a parent group, or a few folks from your school's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee).
- Choose someone who is in a position to make some decisions around equity in your school (examples: a department head, a librarian, a vice principal, a district administrator).
- **Not sure about who to talk to?**
 - **"I don't think there's anyone to talk to at my school!"**
In-the-building community is important in this work, so challenge yourself--you might find a new ally! If your context is really challenged

around these issues, try connecting to local non-school groups, or perhaps community online (see some examples of educational equity-focused online communities on our [Social Media](#) page).

Step 3:

Here are some things to keep in mind:

1. **Start where you are.** In school change, the important thing is to get started. Action helps create more action; start where you are, even if it's a first step like having one conversation with a colleague.
2. **Name the demographic issues you see: be direct, concrete and specific.** Instead of: "I'm worried that some kids may not be living up to their potential," try: "I'm worried that our Black and Latinx women aren't well represented in our honors math and chemistry classes."
3. **Plan to listen.** After you raise an issue, invite your colleague to share their perspective, and try to listen attentively.
4. **Do some reflecting on your own position before getting started.** Thinking of your own various identities, are there potential gaps in your own knowledge or understanding that might be a barrier to connecting? How can you fill these gaps? What kinds of bias or assumptions might you bring to the conversation? How can you prepare yourself to really listen?

Record this assignment and your reflections on how it went in your course journal. If you'd like, share this assignment with someone in your school or organization. Sharing your work can help deepen your thinking about equity in your context.

Video: Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum's Advice on Having Conversations About Race

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In this clip from TSL's podcast [TeachLab](#), Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum shares her advice on having conversations about race. Beverly has taught and written about race and

racism for the past thirty years (including the best-selling book *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations about Race*, which is on our [book list](#)) and has some concrete and actionable advice for educators.

Readings & Resources for Unit 3

Extending your learning for Unit 3

Choose two of the following resources to read, listen to, or watch; skim or scan others that may also be of interest. Record thoughts, insights, and questions in your course journal.

Understanding demographic inequity in schools

- Office of Civil Rights. 2015. [Civil Rights Data Collection](#). U.S. Department of Education. This database allows users to search by US public school and/or district to see student data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, disability and language classification, and social class (including categories like preschool enrollment, gifted and talented programs, discipline, etc.).
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams; Ocen, Priscilla; and Nanda, Jyoti. 2015. [Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected](#) African American Policy Forum and the Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies. This report from Columbia Law School analyzes the experience of Black girls in public schools, particularly how Black girls are disciplined.
- Anyon, Jean. 1980. "[Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work](#)". Journal of Education, Vol 162, No. 1, Fall. In this classic study, Anyon profiles schools serving communities of five different income levels, and describes the different kinds of teaching and learning opportunities that she observes for students in each school.
- Cohn-Vargas, Becki. 2015. "[Countering Stereotype Threat](#)" Teaching Tolerance. April 7. This article describes research about how stereotypes have been linked to negative performance, and gives educators suggestions about combating the negative effects of stereotypes in schools.
- Ebarvia, Tricia. 2019. [How do we show up?](#) Triciaebarvia.org. May 16. Personal story of experiences as an Asian-American woman and educator,

and what it has meant for her to come into racial consciousness. Part of 2019's [31 Days of BIPOC blog series](#).

- Gonzalez, Jennifer. 2018. [Restorative Justice in School: An Overview](#). Cult of Pedagogy. February 18. Restorative justice is a strategy some schools use to build community and mitigate the disparities of traditional discipline approaches.

Speaking about demographic inequities in schools

- Kleinrock, Liz. 2019. [How Can We Broach Hard Conversations in the Classroom?](#) NPR/TED Radio Hour, September 20. A Teaching Tolerance award winner and advisory board member describes turning an uncomfortable question about race into a productive conversation in her 4th grade class.
- DiAngelo, Robin. 2015. [White Fragility: Why It's So Hard to Talk to White People About Racism](#). The Good Men Project. April 9. In this article, Dr. Robin DiAngelo looks at reasons why White people in the U.S. may struggle to talk about race, and describes some reactions she has encountered in her work as an anti-racist educator.
- Willoughby, Brian. 2018. ["Speak Up At School Guide: How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes."](#) Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This guide offers strategies to educators to speak up about bias in different scenarios.
- Michael, Ali, and Eleonora Bartoli. 2014. ["What White Children Need to Know About Race."](#) National Association of Independent Schools. This article describes the ways that White children are socialized not to talk about race. It includes suggestions to help educators create healthy conversations about race and a positive, anti-racist White identity that students can work towards.

TeachLab Podcast Episode:

- Reich, Justin. 2020. [Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum](#). TeachLab Podcast. Conversation with author, psychologist, and educator Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, who offers tips for addressing the ongoing challenges of race and racism in classrooms and schools.

For further reading on these topics, see our [book list](#) in our end of course resources.

Visit our [Additional Resources to do Equity Work in Any Classroom](#) page for lesson plans and resources about addressing bias and affirming demographic identities in the classroom.

Aware versus Avoidant Summary Chart

Below is a chart that summarizes some ideas around the Aware and Avoidant mindsets. For each mindset, you'll notice the chart describes three common ideas associated with the mindset (orientations). It also gives explanations for these orientations, as well as common consequences.

This chart has been adapted from work done by two researchers at the University of Southern California, Drs. Robert Filback and Alan Green, to synthesize some current thinking in the field about educator mindsets for equity.

See a [PDF of the Aware versus Avoidant Mindset Chart here](#).

Roster Justice Facilitator's Guide

One of our goals as a course staff is to make our content as usable and shareable as possible. We want you to be able to share what you learn in this course with colleagues, including our practice spaces. For each practice space, we have created a Facilitator's Guide that will help you run the activity in your context.

[Link to Facilitator's Guide Google Doc](#)

In the Google Doc, click "File" and then select either "Download as" or "Make a Copy..."

[Link to Facilitator's Guide PDF](#)

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Unit 4: Addressing Equity in a Community Context

Welcome to Unit 4!

In Unit 4, you will learn about the Context-Centered versus Context-Neutral mindsets. Rich will explain the importance of drawing on your students' experiences outside of school. You will hear from educators at Latitude High School about the ways they put the Context-Centered mindset into practice to motivate students and design class projects. You will do a practice space focusing on drawing on students' lived experiences outside of school during a lesson. Justin will introduce you to the Rebalancing Mindsets Project where you will identify a mindset in your context that is out of balance and create an asset map identifying people and resources that could help you with rebalancing that mindset.

In Unit 4, you'll find:



Instructional Presentations

- Introduction to Context-Centered versus Context-Neutral Mindsets
- Introduction to Your Action Plan



Practice Space

- *Layers*
- *Layers Debrief*



Voices from the Field

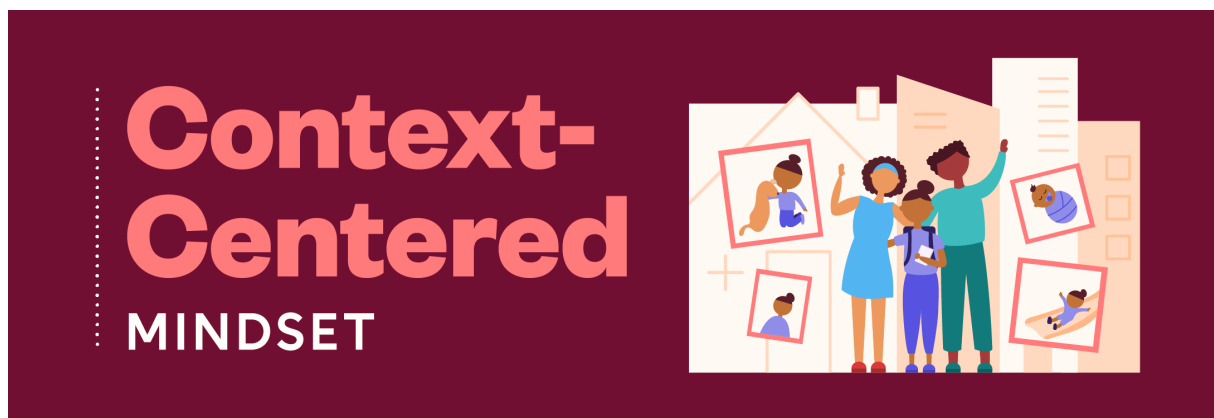
- Centering Context
- Designing a Lesson with Context



Activity and Assignment

- Activity: Rebalancing Mindsets
- Assignment: School and Community Asset Map
- Readings and Resources for Unit 4

Introduction to the Context-Centered versus Context- Neutral Mindsets



Video: Context-Centered versus Context- Neutral

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

Rich explains the Context-Centered mindset whereby educators consider how students' lives, experiences, and communities affect how they learn and what they want to learn, and he juxtaposes it with the Context-Neutral mindset in which educators view what happens outside the classroom as irrelevant to learning. He describes how using the Context-Centered mindset can help educators find ways to connect with students and grow their capacity for learning.

Impact of the Context-Centered Mindset

Video: Voices from the Field: Centering Context

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In this video, educators from [Latitude High School](#) in Oakland, California, explain how they see connections between the curriculum and students' lives as key to engagement. You'll also hear about one creative, community-based project that 10th grade students are doing that connects physics with the challenges of homelessness in their city.

As you watch this video, keep the following question in mind. **Write your thoughts in your course journal.**

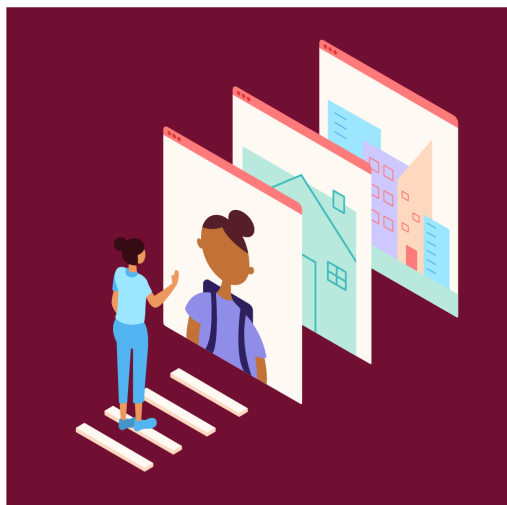
- Principal Lillian Hsu says, "As a school we often talk to kids about 'What's the fire in your belly? What is it that motivates you?' And oftentimes that goes back to their roots."
- Are there currently opportunities in your context for students to use their background or roots as fuel to motivate their academic work? If not, do you see any places in your current practice where you could create opportunities for this?

Video: Voices from the Field: Designing a Lesson with Context

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In this video, you'll hear from a teacher at Purdue Polytechnic High School about a Context-Centered class project she designed about breads from around the world.

Practice Space: Layers



In this third practice space, *Layers*, you will have the opportunity to employ an Aware mindset through a conversation with the school principal.

If you have any trouble, scroll down to Troubleshooting TeacherMoments, post your questions in the Practice Space Troubleshooting Forum, or email us at equitymit503@gmail.com. Below we list a few troubleshooting tips.

[CLICK HERE TO PLAY ROSTER JUSTICE IN A NEW TAB IN YOUR BROWSER](#)

Video Debrief: Layers

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

We facilitated *Layers* with educators from the Boston area in Massachusetts. Consider how they think about the role of students' lived experiences outside of school in their approach to updating their lessons. After you watch the video, you'll have a chance to share your reflections on the practice space.

Our Final Thoughts on Applying Context-Centered and Context-Neutral Mindsets in Context

In the previous practice spaces, we focused on interactions that take place between educators and students inside school. We examined different levels where equity-based decisions can arise: in scheduling decisions, testing students, and approaches to motivating students that look beyond disciplinary action. In the *Layers* practice space, we address how students' lived experience outside of the classroom intersects with their learning.

Practice spaces are places to imagine a range of responses to situations. While it is not always possible to know all of your students' home and community experiences outside of school, we hope that educators will gain confidence in building

meaningful connections between students' lives and class assignments and activities.

With the students in the *Layers* practice space, we discover that each of them contains multiple significant aspects of identity - from the behaviors and demeanors they express on the surface (Layer 1), to their personal passions, strengths and areas for growth (Layer 2), to their home and community lives (Layer 3). The home and community backgrounds we see in Layer 3 can often be invisible on the surface, and can seem more distant from the school environment. Still, these layers of identity ultimately influence students' behaviors, decisions, and relationships in the classroom.

Educators hold a unique power to shape the way their students relate to the classroom and course content. When teachers take into account the many layers students carry in their instructional planning, students' school experiences become much more positive - with higher academic achievement and stronger interpersonal relationships.

Context-Neutral reasoning:

A Context-Neutral mindset favors the idea that interactions students have outside of school are inconsequential for teaching and learning. This view limits the classroom to a closed system, ignoring the influence of student home environments and community exposures. Without recognizing this connection between outside influences, educators often miss out on opportunities to make students' educational experiences interesting, relevant, and meaningful.

Context-Neutral mindset: "The first layer had everything I needed to know. I think the third layer about home lives actually had the least effect on the lesson plan - I think designing for the second layer was less important too - layer three just told me WHY they acted that way or valued that thing which doesn't matter much to me."

Educators with a Context-Neutral mindset find it unnecessary to take into account impactful dynamics students deal with at home when planning assignments and activities. A common Context-Neutral rationale for not altering a lesson plan is that a teacher should draw a line between the classroom and the rest of the student's world. In some cases, a Context-Neutral mindset is willing to include aspects of students' interests and skills into a lesson plan, but not their unique family or

community experiences. For example, assigning a paper where students research a specific cultural practice, but not allowing lived experience as a credible source of evidence.

Context-Neutral mindset: “I don’t think I would [adjust my lesson]. I would just encourage them to think about how the 4th graders like to learn, and also think about how they would enjoy teaching, and ask the 4th graders if they would like that. Cooking and poetry are both great ways to teach about a culture.”

Context-Centered reasoning:

A Context-Centered mindset approaches schoolwork with an appreciation for ways outside of school realities impact student learning and performance. This mindset is about acknowledging that a student’s behavior, interests, and effort are not arbitrary but instead are influenced by their interactions unfolding elsewhere (e.g., familial responsibilities, law enforcement in their community, immigration status, etc.). A Context-Centered rationale doesn’t just recognize what students experience, but accommodates and tailors their curriculum to these students to create a safe and responsive learning space.

Context-Centered mindset:

“Important information to know about your students: Prior educational experiences (both in terms of prerequisite knowledge, their prior engagement and achievement in related classes, and whether they’ve had a positive or negative experience with the topic). It’s also useful to know some basic facts about the students’ lives outside of the classroom in order to create lessons that connect to those experiences.”

This mindset emphasizes that what happens daily outside of schools is directly linked to the learning experience inside.

Final thoughts: Shifting towards a Context-Centered mindset

Like the Aware and Avoidant mindsets, we encourage you to test the hypothesis that Context-Centered and Context-Neutral mindsets are out of balance in schools. There is too much emphasis on expecting all students to step in the classroom totally ready to learn and value a subject on their own - and not enough realizing that a student’s academic achievement is the result of myriad interactions over time with adults inside and outside of the classroom.

There is an important balance to using a Context-Centered mindset. Of course, it's possible to go overboard. Accounting for students' home and community experiences shouldn't excuse them from completing their work or being challenged. Furthermore, when educators are given background information on their students, it is essential to not use that information to judge or place a student into a category that will be detrimental to their academic success.

While many teachers might emphasize the benefits of protecting class time for class-related content only, the impact can be missed opportunities to show students that they are seen and heard.

Moving forward we encourage you to:

- **Notice opportunities to learn about your students' home lives to see if your interactions with them are positively influenced, and how your perspective changes.**
- **See your students as complex individuals whose home life influences their own in-school experience and interactions.**
- **Find ways to connect knowledge about your students with your curriculum and classroom culture to encourage their success.**

Readings and Resources Unit 4

Extending your learning in Unit 4

Choose two of the following resources to read, listen to, or watch; skim or scan others that may also be of interest. Record thoughts, insights, and questions in your course journal.

Considering context and bringing the community in:

- Ladson-Billings, Gloria. 1995. [“But That’s Just Good Teaching!” The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.](#) Theory into Practice. Summer, Ohio State University School of Education. This article describes the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy and provides examples of how educators enriched their pedagogy by asking members of the community to share their expertise in the classroom.
- Milner, Richard. 2011. [Five Easy Ways to Connect with Students.](#) Harvard Education Letter, Volume 27, Number 1, Jan/Feb 2011. In this piece Milner recommends five strategies for building relationships with students, centering their experience, and connecting with their lives outside of school.
- Valenzuela, Angela. 2016. [Academia Cuauhtli: A Partnership-Based, Community-Anchored Saturday School with District-Wide Impacts in Austin, Texas.](#) Educational Equity, Politics & Policy in Texas. October 16. Community groups can sometimes supplement what’s offered in schools. This article describes a community program that focuses on the arts, language, history, and Indigenous roots of the Mexican-American students that attend.
- Van Der Valk, Adrienne. 2018. [“Families Are Such an Asset”](#) Teaching Tolerance, July 30. In this interview, Teaching Tolerance Award Winner Liz Kleinrock talks about how she builds relationships with families throughout the year. Includes a link to the family survey she uses.
- Whitmarsh, Brett. 2017. [“Cornelius Minor: Identifying Won’t Learn and Can’t Learn”](#) (podcast) Heinemann Publishing. Heinemann Blog. May 12. In this episode, Cornelius Minor tells a story about a kid who was actively choosing not to learn from him. What Minor discovered about the kid's life outside of

school helped Minor figure out how he had strained their relationship, and what he could do to repair it.

- Costello, Maureen. 2011. [The Human Face of Immigration](#). Teaching Tolerance. Spring. This article describes how a teacher built empathy for immigrant students through a family heritage project, where students research and celebrate their family's cultural story.

TeachLab Podcast Episode:

- Reich, Justin. 2020. [Geoffrey Canada](#). TeachLab Podcast. In this interview with Dr. Geoffrey Canada (founder of the Harlem Children's Zone), Justin discusses how providing thoughtful wraparound services can support families and children beyond the school walls.

Context-Centered versus Context-Neutral Mindsets Summary Chart

The chart below summarizes some ideas around the Context-Centered and Context-Neutral mindsets. For each mindset, you'll notice the chart describes three common ideas associated with the mindset (orientations). It also gives explanations for these orientations, as well as common consequences.

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Layers Facilitator's Guide

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Introducing the Rebalancing Mindsets Project

Video: Introduction to Your Action Project

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

Justin explains the action project you will complete in Units 4 and 5, where you will identify a mindset that is out of balance in your context, think about assets that could be helpful in rebalancing that mindset, and share your learning from the course with colleagues.

Activity: Rebalancing Mindsets Problem of Practice

Throughout this course you have been studying educator mindsets and how they can become unbalanced in schools. In this activity, you are going to identify a problem of practice related to a mindset that seems out of balance in your context.

A problem of practice is a challenge or issue that requires a solution, is something you care deeply about and are especially excited to work on. (To read more about problems of practice, see [this blog post](#) from the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy.)

Then you are going to consider how you might understand the dynamics of that mindset in your context better, and how you might start work to rebalance it.

Instructions

Step 1: Brainstorm Questions

1. Think back to the four mindsets we've learned about in this course: Equity versus Equality, Asset versus Deficit, Aware versus Avoidant, and Context-Centered versus Context-Neutral. Think about all the ways you've seen the mindsets in action throughout the course. Then, jot down some notes about how you've seen the mindsets in action in your context, either in balanced or unbalanced ways. Consider any of the following:

- Classroom environments and academic policies
- School-wide norms, expectations, and policies
- Curricula
- Relationships between faculty/staff and students
- Relationships between the school and families/community

2. In these spaces, is there a particular example where the mindset seems out of balance? How is that impacting students? Add these examples to your notes.

3. From your notes, choose a problem of practice that focuses on an out-of-balance mindset in your context. It should be something that you care about and would be excited to work on rebalancing with your colleagues.

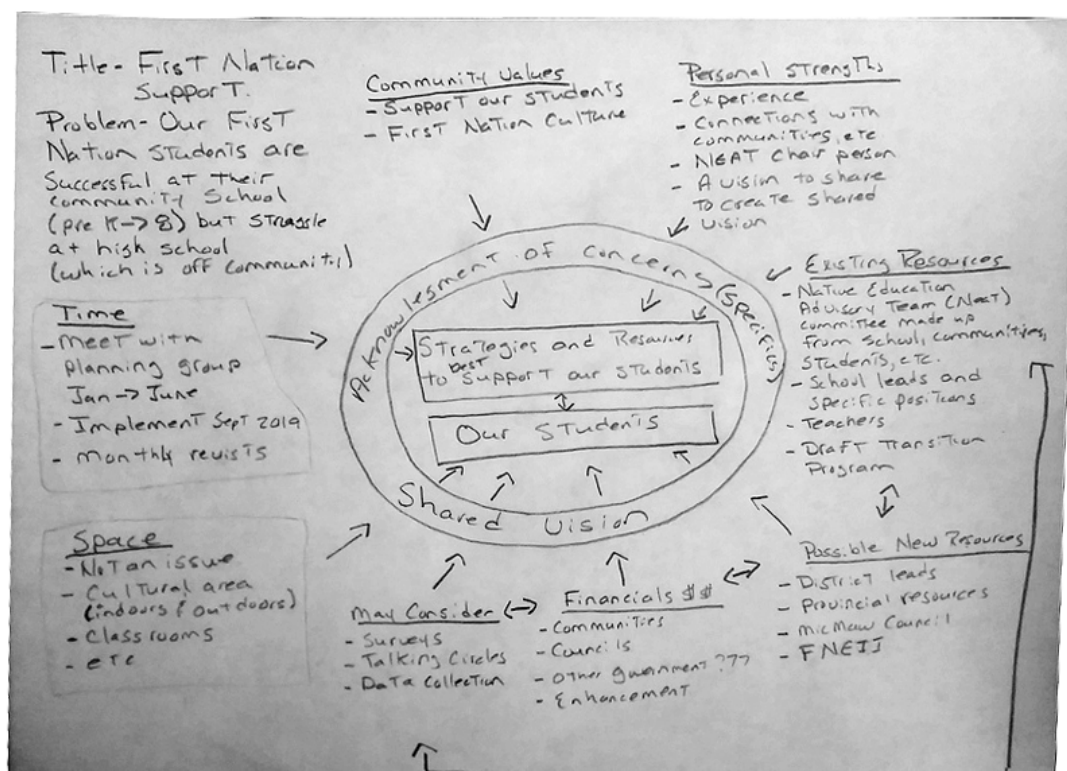
Unit 4 Assignment: School and Community Asset Map

Introduction to Asset Maps

The asset mapping assignment is all about recognizing strengths and resources. Each one of us can feel isolated from time to time in our daily lives, both at work and beyond. However, with some reflection, we can often realize that we are connected to people and resources in all sorts of ways.

In this assignment, you will develop an asset map. An asset map is a visual representation of the valuable resources around you and how they connect to each other. By identifying assets in your school and community, you may see specific conditions of your environment that could help in rebalancing thinking and practice around a mindset. As you complete the assignment, we encourage you to pay particular attention to individuals and groups you may not normally think of as resources. You may find that there is more strength, resilience, and knowledge in your context than you currently realize.

Below is an example of an asset map from a past participant in our *Launching Innovation in Schools* course.



Seeing Strengths in Marginalized Families and Communities

As you complete your asset map, we encourage you to think back to the **six forms of cultural capital** you learned about in Unit 2 (See Tara Yosso's [Six Forms of Cultural Capital Framework in 2.6.1](#)) that marginalized students often bring to the classroom that can go unrecognized by educators and schools. (The forms of cultural capital are: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance capital.) In Unit 2, we encouraged you to apply this framework to individual students. You can also apply the framework to families and communities to identify strengths in students' cultural contexts that can be resources for making schools more equitable.

Sometimes educators fall into patterns of viewing students' families and communities through a deficit lens, which makes it difficult to use a Context-Centered mindset. One concept that is popular in some schools and districts, but deficit frames families and communities, is the so-called "culture of poverty." This is the idea that people living in poverty share a common culture with the same beliefs, values, and behaviors. It can lead educators to hold harmful views of their students' families, like believing that poor families don't value their children's education.

Like meritocracy, we believe that the culture of poverty is a myth. (See Paul Gorski's article [The Myth of the Culture of Poverty](#) for a more detailed critique.) We reject this kind of thinking because it's one common way that racism, classism, sexism, etc. show up in schools.

Instructions for Assignment: School and Community Asset Map

Asset maps can help you find specific conditions of your environment that make addressing a variety of challenges and new initiatives, including re-balancing mindsets, easier. In this assignment, you will focus on identifying assets in your school and broader community to help you rebalance the mindset you identified in the [Activity: Rebalancing Mindsets Problem of Practice](#).

1. **Ask yourself what assets are present in your school that could help you to rebalance your chosen mindset.** Why are they strong assets? How do the assets relate to one another? Jot down a list of these school assets. We recommend being as specific as possible, for example, listing specific people or titles like “6th grade technology integration specialist” instead of “support personnel.”

Some examples of school assets are:

- *People:* Think about the teachers, administrators, and staff who could be resources in rebalancing your mindset. Don’t forget about students, since they’re often great at identifying the parts of schools they see as assets.
- *School values and beliefs:* Does your mindset align with any goals or missions of your school?
- *Spaces:* This could mean actual physical spaces for meetings and other activities (for example your school or other community spaces) as well as online spaces such as social media groups or online learning spaces.
- *Time:* Maybe you have some free periods each school day or flexibility regarding professional development opportunities.
- *Personal Strengths:* You are also an asset! Consider your personal strengths that make you the perfect leader to work on rebalancing your chosen mindset. Your skills might include enthusiasm, communication skills, respect of colleagues, willingness to try new things, perseverance, etc.

Note: If you’re having a hard time thinking of assets in your school, try thinking about a big task or project that you have recently completed. Who did you work with to accomplish your goals? Who was especially helpful? What other resources were especially helpful?

2. **Ask yourself what is present in the community that will help you to rebalance your chosen mindset?** Why are they strong assets? How do the assets relate to one another? Jot down a list of these community assets. Again, be as specific as possible.

Some examples of community assets:

- Community values and beliefs: Does your mindset align with any goals or missions of your community?
 - Families and caregivers: Families and caregivers should be key resources in serving students more equitably. Parents you already have relationships and contact with can be a resource. Be sure to think about families and caregivers you may not know yet as well.
 - Community resources: These include a wide range of things such as municipal funding, community organizations, or people who are already involved in your school (school board or committee members), or individuals who could help you connect to social networks outside of your own.
3. Place the mindset that needs to be re-balanced in the center of your asset map. Around it, **use symbols, images, and words to add the school and community assets** you identified. Highlight importance, type, strength of connection, etc. through shape, color, line, size.
 4. Be sure to **include an explanatory text or key** showing how to read your map.
 5. **We recommend sharing your problem of practice and asset map with a colleague for feedback.** Find a trusted colleague and share your problem or practice and asset map with them. Explain the assignment, share your work and ask if they have any questions. Ask for feedback on your asset map, for example, if there are any other assets they would suggest to add, or their own experiences with your problem of practice.

Reflection:

In your journal, jot down the following:

- A short description of your context and role (you could share size, demographics, location, etc.).
- A sentence or two about your problem or practice and the mindset you want to rebalance in your school/context

- An image of your School and Community Asset Map
- A reflection on the process of creating the map

Video: Advice from José Luis Vilson about Building Cultural Competence

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In a recent episode of [TeachLab podcast](#), we talked with José Luis Vilson, a math teacher and activist who founded [EduColor](#), an organization dedicated to race and social justice issues in education. He shared his advice for educators looking to build their cultural competence and connect with students from different backgrounds.

Unit 5: The Lifelong Work of Equity Teaching

Welcome to Unit 5!

In Unit 5, Justin and Rich share their advice for using the mindsets to spark change in schools. You will hear from educators from the featured schools about how they have taken on equity and incorporated the four mindsets into their thinking and practice. Justin will share some advice for facilitating a practice space with others in your context, and you will prepare to share an activity from the course with colleagues.

In Unit 5, you'll find:



Instructional Presentations

- Using Mindsets to Spark Change
- Facilitating Practice Spaces



Voices from the Field

- Equity Mindsets in the Classroom



Activity and Assignment

- Activity: I Used to Think, but Now I Think
- Assignment: Sharing Your Experiences, Inviting to Learn Together
- Readings and Resources for Unit 5

Taking on Equity

Video: Voices from the Field: Equity Mindsets in the Classroom

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In this video, you'll hear from educators at three of our featured schools about the ways they've incorporated equity mindsets and practices into their classroom practice. They'll talk about the importance of forming relationships with students, how they think about identifying and meeting students' needs, and their approach to designing curriculum.

If you are interested in more resources for doing work around identity, check out our section, [Additional Resources to do Equity Work in Any Classroom](#).

Unit 5 Assignment - Rebalancing Mindsets Project: Inviting Colleagues to Learn Together

In Unit 4, you chose a problem of practice around a mindset that was out of balance at your school or organization, and imagined a shift you'd like to see. Making the shifts you imagined and rebalancing mindsets takes time; it will be a long term project. But there are action steps you can take now to start that process. One powerful step is sharing some of your learning about the mindset you selected with your colleagues.

Instructions

Create a plan to share your activity. Consider the following aspects and jot down some notes about each one:

1. Consider your goals. When you share this activity with colleagues, what do you hope to achieve - with your colleagues and in your context? If you were to succeed in your goals for this activity beyond your wildest dreams, what might that look like? How might this activity fit in with existing conversations, aspirations, strengths or

challenges at your school or organization? What questions or concerns do you have about the activity?

2. Consider your audience. What group of colleagues might be interested in having this type of conversation? Who might benefit from it? Keep in mind that it's OK to start small and then work up to sharing with a larger audience.

a. This is a great opportunity to reach out to people already working on equity in your context (examples might be educators on a diversity, equity, and inclusion committee, or those working with English language learners or students with Individualized Education Plans, who often address equity issues). This is also a great opportunity to introduce people to equity and the work you've been doing in the course.

b. Consider what, if any, concerns you have about doing the activity with colleagues? How might you alleviate these concerns, or prepare to address them if they do occur?

3. Choose an activity from the course you've completed and that you think would help you and your colleagues talk about and start to rebalance this mindset. Consider your problem of practice and the mindset that you think is out of balance in your context.

a. We encourage you to try out practice spaces with colleagues. Here are the practice spaces in the course; click the link to access a facilitator's guide for each.

- [*Jeremy's Journal Facilitator's Guide*](#)
- [*Coach Wright Facilitator's Guide*](#)
- [*Roster Justice Facilitator's Guide*](#)
- [*Layers Facilitator's Guide*](#)

b. There are also lots of activities from the course that you could modify and share with colleagues. For example, you could have folks do a **Roster Audit** or **Left-Hand Column Case** activity, or consider the needs of a focal student. You could also share and discuss a course video, or material from the

Readings and Resources section of the course. [The Learning Circle Guide](#) offers interactive activity suggestions and some discussion questions for videos, assignments and readings.

4. Logistics. Consider when and where you will do the activity. How will you invite colleagues? What supporting materials will you want to have on hand (your own work on the activity, laptops, projector, facilitator's guides for practice spaces, etc.)?

Tip: If you've shared work from the course with your students, or made shifts in your own practice, sharing quotes, reactions or work products from students can help educators connect emotionally with this work.

5. Ask a friend or colleague to review your plan and provide feedback. Share any questions you have about the share with them, ask for feedback and advice, or perhaps ask them to do a practice run with you.

6. Share the course activity with a group of colleagues. After you're finished, try to jot down some notes to yourself about how it went.

Reflection:

In your journal, jot down the following:

- The activity you're planning to share, your audience, and your goals.
- Logistics considerations for sharing.
- What you would like feedback on from a colleague or friend before sharing.
- When you complete it, any notes or reflections about how sharing your activity went.

Video: Facilitating Practice Spaces

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

Justin shares his tips for facilitating a practice space with colleagues, from the logistics of scheduling to helping people share their perspectives to ending with a call to action.

Readings and Resources Unit 5

Extending your learning for Unit 5

Choose two of the following resources to read, listen to, or watch; skim or scan others that may also be of interest.

Record thoughts, insights, and questions in your course journal.

Making Equity Change in Schools

- Collins, Cory. 2019. [A Hopeful Case of Teacher Leadership and Confronting Bias in Education](#). Teaching Tolerance. A pair of Boston teachers decide to bring equity learning to their school, eventually including an equity audit, a grant from the city, and a year-long professional learning program with their colleagues.
- Miller, Cody. 2019. [Being a Radical Pragmatist: Reflections on Introducing LGBTQ YA Lit to an ELA Department](#). English Leadership. February 2019. NCTE. The author describes how a “do what you can” strategy helped him discover ways to use the language of pre-existing initiatives to gradually bring substantive equity changes to his school.
- Tania Anaissie, Victor Cary, David Clifford, Tom Malarkey, Susie Wise. "[Liberatory Design Cards: Your Toolkit to Design for Equity](#)." Stanford d.school's K12Lab and The National Equity Project. Liberatory Design is a subset of design thinking that guides educators in designing instruction, practices or systems with equity, and empathy in mind. See also: [Design Justice Network Principles](#) from the Design Justice Network.

Starting Conversations About Change

- Minor, Cornelius. 2019. [On the Podcast: Cornelius Minor and Being Semi-Brave](#). Heinemann Publishing. February 14. In this podcast Cornelius Minor gives advice about how to make change in your school and discusses the importance of people who are willing to be “semi-brave” - even if only for a moment or two.

- Minor, Cornelius. 2019. "[An Articulation Plan for Saying What You Really Mean](#)." Heinemann. This template provides tools for educators to “pitch” ideas for shifts in practice or policy to stakeholders.

Self-Care

- Brown, Valeria. 2019. "[Sis, How is Your Heart?](#)" Clear the Air Education. May 19. In this blog post, #ClearTheAir community founder Val Brown describes the crucial nature of self-care in educational equity work, particularly for women of color, and how for her self-care looked like life-saving medical treatment.

TeachLab Podcast Episode

- Reich, Justin. 2020. [Neema Avashia](#). TeachLab Podcast. Neema Avashia, a civics teacher in the Boston Public Schools, speaks to the importance of empowering students to express themselves, teaching difficult topics, and helping students engage in real-world civics lessons.

Video: Using the Mindsets to Spark Change

[Watch video on YouTube](#)

In this video, Justin and Rich discuss the importance of sustaining a focus on equity and opportunity-centered teaching. They discuss how it should be central to the work of schools, not a time-limited initiative. Rich shares how he takes care of himself as he does this challenging work.

Activity: I Used to Think, But Now I Think

As we near the end of the course, it's helpful to reflect on how this learning experience has impacted you.

Use the following prompt to record your thoughts in the forum below:

I used to think _____ about equitable teaching mindsets and practices, but now I think _____.

If needed, include some additional explanation (maybe your thoughts and feelings changed based on the work you did or a discussion you had in a course forum, etc.).

Additional Resources

Resources for Educators of Different Disciplines & Student Populations

As learners consider how to adapt equity teaching practices to their own work, we're offering some resources that speak more directly to different disciplines and student groups. You'll recognize some resources from the course while others are appearing for the first time.

Math Classrooms

- Heinemann. [Heinemann Podcast](#). This series features interviews with experts and educators who share teaching strategies with an equity lens. Many math focused episodes, including:
 - Dingle, Marian. 2019. ["On the Podcast: Heinemann Fellow Marian Dingle and Dr. Cathery Yeh on the Culture of Mathematics"](#)
 - Pai, Minjung. 2019. ["On the Podcast: Scaffolding Instruction with Identity Work with Betina Hsieh and Minjung Pai."](#) Heinemann Blog. In this podcast episode researcher and teacher educator Betina Hsieh discusses the identities we bring into the classroom, particularly our math classrooms, and why understanding them is so crucial to help us reach our students.
- Gutstein, Eric and Bob Peterson. 2013. [Rethinking Mathematics - 2nd Edition: Teaching Social Justice by the Numbers](#). Rethinking Schools. This book is a collection of articles that offers strategies to combine the analysis of real world social issues and math teaching.
- Reich, Justin. 2020. [José Luis Vilson](#). TeachLab Podcast. José Luis Vilson discusses how to create power in a math classroom, along with the mission of EduColor, an organization that Vilson co-founded to elevate the voices of public school advocates of color.

- Reich, Justin. 2020. [Ilana Horn](#). TeachLab Podcast. Dr. Ilana Horn, a researcher and teacher educator at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College, discusses listening more closely to student thinking, and finding ways to shift curriculum from "school math" to the kind of math that's both more engaging to students and closer to what real mathematicians do.

Science Classrooms

- HBO. 2017. "[The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks](#)." The HBO movie based on the life of Henrietta Lacks, a Black woman whose cancer cells, harvested without her permission, went on to form the basis of modern cell-based research. (Learn more about Henrietta Lacks and her cells in [this book](#) or [this podcast](#)).
- Edutopia. 2018. "[Getting All Students to Participate](#)." Video about using roles in science group work as a strategy to frame assets and engage students of all levels.
- Harmon, Amy. 2019 "[Can a Biology Class Reduce Racism?](#)" New York Times. Dec. 7.

Language Arts and Humanities

- Campbell, Edith. 2020. [JEDI Resources for Online PreK-12 Teaching During COVID and Beyond: Just, Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive resources for PreK-16 online teaching](#). Indiana State University Library. Bank of content and lesson plans focused on justice, diversity, and inclusion suitable for online learning sorted by age group.
- Smith, Cynthia Leitich. 2015. "[Rudine Sims on Windows, Mirrors & Sliding Glass Doors](#)." In this Reading Rockets video, Rudine Sims explains the

metaphor she introduced in the 1990s as a way of thinking about diversity in young adult literature.

- Stoltzfus, Kate. 2019. ["The Text Disrupters"](#) ASCD. February, Volume 61, Number 2. Article sharing recommendations from the online [#DisruptTexts](#) community about how to diversify classic K12 literacy curricula.
- Chandler-Ward, Jenna and Elizabeth Denevi. 2017. ["Teaching While White Episode 1 - To Teach or To Kill a Mockingbird."](#) Teaching While White. This podcast episode looks at dynamics of race and whiteness in the classic novel, considers ways in which it may be harmful to students.
- Jill Hermann-Wilmarth and Ryan, Caitlin L. 2015. ["Doing What You Can: Considering Ways to Address LGBT Topics in Language Arts Curricula"](#). Language Arts, Vol. 92, Number 6, July 2015. Three strategies about how to address homophobia and heterosexism in the classroom.
- Heinemann. [Heinemann Podcast](#). This podcast series features interviews with experts and educators sharing teaching strategies with an equity lens. Many are focused on equity in language arts classrooms, including this one: ["Teaching Readers with Sonja Cherry-Paul and Dana Johansen."](#)

Primary and Early Education

- The Children's Community School. 2018. ["They're not too young to talk about race!"](#) Graphic on how young children perceive race, with resources to support conversations about race.
- Turner, Brett. 2019. ["Teaching Kindness Isn't Enough."](#) Teaching Tolerance. Fall. "Teaching kindness is a staple of elementary practice, but that isn't the same as teaching justice."
- Michael, Ali, and Eleonora Bartoli. ["What White Children Need to Know About Race."](#) National Association of Independent Schools. This article describes the

ways that White children are socialized not to talk about race. It includes suggestions to help educators create healthy conversations about race and a positive, anti-racist White identity that students can work towards.

- Henderson, Janelle W. 2019. "[Letter to an Overwhelmed Teacher.](#)" Heinemann Blog. October 23. A teacher reflects on a challenging year, including the ways that asset-framing, listening to students, small shifts in response to student needs, and affirming student identities built positive moments in a majority Black classroom.
- Kleinrock, Liz. 2019. "[How Can We Broach Hard Conversations in the Classroom?](#)" NPR/TED Radio Hour, September 20. "A Teaching Tolerance award winner and advisory board member Liz Kleinrock describes turning an uncomfortable question about race into a productive conversation in her 4th grade class."

Special Education

- Crissinger, Candice. 2018. "[High Achievement Requires High Expectations: My Family's Story.](#)" Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services Blog, U.S. Department of Education. A parent discusses the power of a strengths-based approach to her son's disability support.
- Flores, Tylia. 2019. "[How We Can Improve Disability Inclusion in Schools.](#)" The Mighty. The author, who identifies as a person with a disability, offers several suggestions to include disability awareness in the curriculum and describes the impact it could have on students with and without disabilities.
- Gonzalez, Jennifer. "[Episode 56: Creating a Welcoming Classroom for Special Ed Students.](#)" Cult of Pedagogy. This blog post lists five strategies to help teachers support students with disabilities (also available as a podcast).

Teacher Educators

We hope that many resources here will speak to teacher educators. Here are a few created by teacher educators:

- Reich, Justin. 2020. [Ilana Horn](#). TeachLab Podcast. Dr. Ilana Horn, a researcher and teacher educator at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College, discusses listening more closely to student thinking, and finding ways to shift curriculum from "school math" to the kind of math that's both more engaging to students and closer to what real mathematicians do.
- Reich, Justin. 2020. [José Luis Vilson](#). TeachLab Podcast. José Luis Vilson discusses how to create power in a math classroom, along with the mission of EduColor, an organization that Vilson co-founded to elevate the voices of public school advocates of color.
- Pai, Minjung. 2019. "[On the Podcast: Scaffolding Instruction with Identity Work with Betina Hsieh and Minjung Pai](#)." Heinemann Blog. In this podcast episode researcher and teacher educator Betina Hsieh discusses the identities we bring into the classroom, particularly our math classrooms, and why understanding them is so crucial to help us reach our students.
- Reich, Justin. 2020. [Liz Self](#). TeachLab Podcast. Dr. Liz Self, Assistant Professor of the Practice at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College of Education and Human Development, joins Justin Reich on TeachLab. They discuss Liz's early teaching experiences, racial equity in the classroom, and Liz's current work where she uses clinical simulations to help teachers practice for challenging situations in teaching.

Additional Resources to Use in the Classroom

This section contains assorted resources and lessons to do equity work across disciplines.

- [Teaching Tolerance](#) is an organization that offers age-appropriate resources to help students learn to affirm diversity, stand up to bias, and talk about topics like gender, identity, or family. Lessons teach “hard history,” social justice, and other topics.
- [Zinn Education Project](#) offers lessons and multimedia resources from different periods in American History, with a justice and equity lens.

Talking About Identity

- Sarah Ahmed’s book, *Being the Change: Lessons and Strategies to Teach Social Comprehension* contains many detailed lessons to help students talk about identity, bias and current events. Ahmed suggests that if we as adults want to do work around bias or identity with young people, it’s always best to try the activity with adults first. This allows us to practice responding to emotions, comments and questions that may come up before we try out the lesson with children.
- Teaching Tolerance. [Discovering my Identity](#). In this lesson, created for grades 3-5, “students will describe aspects of their identities such as race, gender, ability, religion and more.”
- Facing History and Ourselves. [Teaching Strategy: Identity Charts](#). Learn how to use identity charts to describe our own identities, as well as those of people from history or fiction.
- Bailin, Emily. 2014. [The Power of Digital Storytelling](#). TEDx. In this short video, Bailin shares an activity she uses to open up conversations about identity with students, and explains why it was a game-changer for her in the classroom.

Assorted Best Practice Guides

- Teaching Tolerance. 2017. [Best Practices for Serving English Language Learners and Their Families](#).
- Collins, Cory. 2018. [LGBTQ Best Practices Guide](#). Teaching Tolerance
- GLSEN. 2019. "[Erasure and Resilience: The Experiences of LGBTQ Students of Color](#)." A series of four research reports that examines the school experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), Black, Latinx, and Native and Indigenous LGBTQ youth.
- Thurber, Arnie and Brandy, Joe. 2018. [Creating Accessible Learning Environments](#). Vanderbilt University.

Strategies To Talk About Challenging Topics

- "[Let's Talk!](#)" [Discussing Race, Racism and other Difficult Topics with Students](#) (a Teaching Tolerance Guide).
- ACT (affirm, counter, transform) framework and [Talking About Race Toolkit](#).
- Michael, Ali, and Eleonora Bartoli. "[What White Children Need to Know About Race](#)." National Association of Independent Schools. This article describes the ways that White children are socialized not to talk about race. It includes suggestions to help educators create healthy conversations about race and a positive, anti-racist White identity that students can work towards.

Diversifying your Media Consumption: Learning from a Variety of Voices

This summer some of our instructional design staff attended a workshop by [Teaching Tolerance](#) where they shared the top two resources below, and suggested that if your teaching staff or curriculum does not represent certain facets of

identity, media can help you bring diverse voices to your context. This list was inspired by that suggestion. And while this list is by no means comprehensive, we hope it can also help you fill gaps in your own knowledge of the experiences and histories of different groups in the US.

Some of these resources are single episodes in a larger series; you can start with the suggested piece or explore the whole series.

Understanding Current Diverse Experiences in the United States

- New York Times. 2017. "[A Conversation with Native Americans on Race.](#)" A mini-documentary that shares first person stories and reflections from U.S. Native Americans about their identities. From the series [A Conversation on Race](#) by The New York Times. These short documentaries include conversations about race with Asian Americans, Whites, Latinos, young Black people, and Black women.
- Vox. 2019. "[After San Bernadino, this couple fought Islamophobia with Donuts and Conversation.](#)" Short film about the couple who inspired the #AskAMuslim campaign. From the series [The Secret Life of Muslims](#). Smartypants Pictures. This series of short documentaries captures different aspects of Muslim American life.
- Parker, Kim and Tricia Ebarvia. 2019. "[31 Days IBPOC: Celebrating the teacher voices of Indigenous, Black, and People of Color.](#)" Thirty-one short essays by educators who identify as Black, Indigenous and people of color, writing about their experiences as students and teachers today. You can follow many of these educators on social media as they share resources and perspectives.

Podcasts* on present-day LGBTQ experiences in the US:

- [Strange Fruit](#). NPR. "Musings on politics, pop culture, and Black gay life."

- [Outward](#). Slate. "Expanding the LGBTQ conversation."
- [Nancy with Tobin Low and Kathy Tu](#). WNYC Radio. "Stories and conversations about the queer experience today. Prepare to laugh and cry and laugh again."
- [Beyond the Letters](#). Heinemann Publishing. Interviews with LGBTQ educators about "what it means to truly create inclusive educational spaces for queer youth and educators, alike."
 - Many of the recommendations in this section come from educator Cody Miller in [this](#) episode of Beyond the Letters.

Historical Inequality in the US

Resources to help fill gaps in understanding a shared history.

- Center for Documentary Studies. [Scene on Radio](#). Podcast from Duke University tells stories from US history to explore the concept of democracy. Notable seasons include [Seeing White](#), [Men](#), [The Land That Never Has Been Yet](#). Notable Episode:
 - ["Little War on the Prairie"](#) on Indigenous history and its erasure in mainstream schools.
- Guo, Jess. 2016. ["The real reasons the U.S. became less racist toward Asian Americans."](#) Washington Post. History of the "model minority" myth that stereotypes Asian Americans.
- NPR. [CodeSwitch](#). Podcast about race and identity. Tagline: "Ever find yourself in a conversation about race and identity where you just get...stuck? Code Switch can help. We're all journalists of color, and this isn't just the work we do. It's the lives we lead." Notable episodes:
 - [This episode](#) about preserving the Native Hawaiian language.
 - February, 2020 episodes focused on Black resistance, including this episode about activism and education. [This episode](#) tells of the

rarely-taught US race riots of 1919. Includes author Eve Ewing reading aloud her poem about the event.

- The episode "[Chicago's Red Summer](#)" tells of the rarely-taught attacks on Black Chicagoans and so-called "race riots" of 1919. Author Eve Ewing reads her poem about the event.
- Hannah-Jones, Nikole. 2019. [1619 Project](#). New York Times Magazine. A collection of essays, poetry and images describing the influence of US slavery on present-day American culture, policies, and daily life. Also available as a [podcast](#).
- Teaching Tolerance. [Queer America](#). Podcast focusing on moments in LGBTQ history, "revealing stories of LGBTQ life we should have learned in school."
- Cheeks, Maura. 2019. "[The Wealth Gap Taints America's Success Stories](#)." The Atlantic. Using statistics, history and personal narrative, this article challenges the myth of meritocracy by describing the precariousness of African-American wealth in the United States.
- Pioneer PBS. 2014. [Postcards: Dakota Wicohan](#). Video documents a group that works to revitalize Dakota culture and language in the community. This is the same group who created a [social studies curriculum](#) about the Dakota people for 6th graders across Minnesota.

Book List

Becoming a more equitable educator is a lifelong pursuit. One of the best ways we've found to join the conversation and boost your own learning is through books. Here is a list of books we'd recommend for your reading list, organized by unit.

Please note we do not expect learners to absorb whole books during the run of this course; rather, we hope these books will be useful for long-term learning (summer reading, faculty book clubs, etc.).

Unit 0 Recommended Books

- Hammond, Zaretta. 2015. [*Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*](#). Corwin Publishing. This book combines recent brain research, education science, cultural theory, and a career's worth of educational strategies to describe a pathway to help culturally and linguistically diverse learners become confident, independent learners. *For a preview of themes from the book, check out this [short interview](#) with Hammond.*
- Millner, Richard H IV. 2020. [*Start Where You Are but Don't Stay There: Understanding Diversity, Opportunity Gaps, and Teaching in Today's Classrooms, Second Edition*](#). Harvard Education Press. This book combines theory and case studies to describe the mindsets and practices that can help create opportunity for culturally diverse learners.

Unit 1 Recommended Books

- Minor, Cornelius. 2018. [*We Got This: Equity, Access, and the Quest to Be Who Our Students Need Us to Be*](#). Heinemann Publishing. Minor gives concrete strategies to listen and be responsive to student needs, reframe our thinking about discipline, and speak up when initiatives aren't working for kids. *For a preview of the book's content, this [30 minute podcast](#) episode recaps themes from Minor's book.*
- Meyer, Anne, David H. Rose, and David Gordon. 2014. [*Universal Design for Learning: Theory & Practice*](#). CAST Professional Publishing. This book describes the concept of universal design for learning, as well as how it can be applied by educators in schools.

- Ahmed, Sara K. 2018. [*Being the Change: Lessons and Strategies to Teach Social Comprehension*](#). Heinemann. Ahmed, a former member of the teacher leadership team for Facing History and Ourselves, offers lesson plans and strategies for teaching about topics of identity, bias, and more.
- Shalaby, Carla. 2017. [*Troublemakers*](#). The New Press. In this remarkable book, Shalaby uses case studies of four early-elementary children to reframe “troublemakers” as teachers of valuable lessons.

Unit 2 Recommended Books

- Steele, Claude M. 2011. [*Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do \(Issues of Our Time\)*](#). W.W. Norton & Company.
- Valenzuela, Angela. 1999. [*Subtractive Schooling: U.S. - Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*](#). SUNY Press. Starting from research findings of Mexican-born students outperforming their US-born Mexican-American peers, Valenzuela uses a micro-ethnographic study of a Texas high school to look at the ways that biased or assimilationist schooling might decrease student achievement.

Unit 3 Recommended Books

- Tatum, Beverly Daniel. 2017. [*Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations about Race*](#). Hachette Book Group. This book traces how racial identity development starts in young children and grows over the lifecourse. This book can help teachers understand students of color as they develop their identity, and offers a roadmap for White students to develop a positive racial identity, and gives suggestions on how to talk about race. Preview themes in the book with Dr. Tatum’s [short TEDx talk](#) with advice about discussing race with young children.

- Singleton, Glenn E. 2015 [*Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools*](#). Corwin. This book walks readers through a step-by-step process for considering one's own identity, the challenges of interracial conversations, and how race impacts schools. Useful for individuals, but also provides resources for leading group conversations.
- Irving, Debby. 2014. [*Waking Up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race*](#). Elephant Room Press. This mix of personal memoir, history, and how-to tells the story of how the author came to understand her own cultural roots in the process of understanding racial justice. Filled with insight, this is a great starting place for introspection for White educators.
- DiAngelo, Robin. 2018. [*White Fragility*](#). Beacon Press. DiAngelo coined the term "white fragility" to describe the reactions that White people in the US may have to a racially stressful or uncomfortable situation, which serve to reinforce a white racial hierarchy. The book explores how white fragility develops and how it helps maintain systemic racism, and provides suggestions for how we can move forward productively.

Unit 4 Recommended Books

- Delpit, Lisa. 2013. [*"Multiplication Is for White People": Raising Expectations for Other People's Children*](#). The New Press. This book describes inequitable educational outcomes in the United States and ways to create more equitable classrooms.
- Meizhu Lui, Barbara Robles, Betsy Leondar-Wright, Rose Brewer, and Rebecca Adamson. 2006. [*The Color of Wealth: The Story Behind the U.S. Racial Wealth Divide*](#). United for a Fair Economy. This book asks the question: why do some racial groups in the U.S. have more wealth today? To answer, it looks back at U.S. policies going back generations and how they impacted

Indigenous people and Latino, Black, Asian and White Americans. A primer on how government and law has shaped the U.S. racial experience.

Other Books

- Cushman, Kathleen. 2005. [*Fires in the Bathroom: Advice for Teachers from High School Students*](#). The New Press. This book shares input and perspectives from students for teachers in urban high schools.
- Van Maele, Dimitri, Patrick B. Forsyth, and Mieke Van Houtte. 2014. [*Trust and School Life: The Role of Trust for Learning, Teaching, Leading, and Bridging*](#). Springer.

Practice Space Facilitator's Guides

At the Teaching Systems Lab, our content is designed to be shared, edited, and remixed. We encourage you to share what you are learning with colleagues and friends.

In that spirit, we created facilitator's guides for our practice spaces. These will help you lead practice spaces in your context, with tips about facilitating rich conversation, logistics, and troubleshooting. Each includes a link to the practice space that does not require an edX login.

- Jeremy's Journal Facilitator's Guide ([PDF](#) / [Google Doc](#))
- Coach Wright Facilitator's Guide ([PDF](#) / [Google Doc](#))
- Roster Justice Facilitator's Guide ([PDF/Google Doc](#))
- Layers Facilitator Guide ([PDF/Google Doc](#))

Please encourage your colleagues to complete the survey at the end of each practice space; it helps us understand how our materials are used and shared. To learn more about our Creative Commons license and sharing course content, click [here](#).