CREATING BIAS-FREE CLASSROOMS

TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

MentorScape

Crafting Bias-Free Classrooms in Europe

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Grant Agreement n°:
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Contents

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About the project

The modern classroom, a microcosm of society, stands at the crossroads of diversity, globalisation, and rapidly evolving socio-political landscapes. It's here that young minds learn not just academic content, but the nuances of human interaction, empathy, and mutual respect. However, underlying biases, both overt and covert, have the potential to significantly sway the education process, often perpetuating stereotypes, unequal opportunities, and inadvertently shaping perceptions for life.

The aim of "MentorScape: Crafting Bias-Free Classrooms in Europe" is empowering teachers to champion an inclusive educational environment where biases are acknowledged and dismantled.

Objectives

- To investigate the nature and impact of biases in educational systems across different European regions.
- To develop collaborative strategies and tools that educators can use to address and mitigate these biases.
- To foster a community of European educators dedicated to promoting inclusivity and diversity in their classrooms.

Outcomes

- A comprehensive understanding of the nature and nuances of biases in educational systems.
- A toolkit for educators, encompassing strategies, lesson plans, and resources to address and mitigate biases.
- An active community of educators collaborating continuously to ensure inclusivity in education.

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The partnership

ECIESC - Bulgaria

As a NGO committed to innovation and professional development, ECIESC brings a robust framework for behavioural training. Their long-standing experience in conducting seminars, training sessions, and conferences ensures that the project benefits from methodologically sound, impactful training modules tailored to address biases.

MARESAL MUSTAFA KEMAL ORTAOKULU - Türkiye

MMKO offers invaluable on-ground insights into the challenges of integrating a multicultural student body, given Turkey's unique position with diverse ethnicities and refugee influxes. Their firsthand experience will guide the project in understanding the real-world manifestations of biases and in developing practical interventions that resonate with
schools facing similar challenges.

Jumping Local Project SL - Spain

Jumping Local Projects' strength lies in its research-driven approach. With their dedication to innovation in education and a track record of developing strategic models, JLP promises to infuse the project with evidence-based strategies and cutting-edge pedagogical tools. Their experience in training teachers ensures that the project's interventions are both innovative and practical.

Agrupamento de Escolas de Cristelo - Portugal

With its broad educational spectrum, ranging from general education to specialised courses for students with disabilities, AEC offers a comprehensive understanding of diverse student needs. Their experience in managing a varied student body will be crucial in ensuring that the project's outcomes are inclusive and cater to the entire spectrum of student diversity.

Together, this partnership represents a blend of research prowess, practical on-ground experience, training expertise, and a deep understanding of the multifaceted challenges posed by biases in education. Each partner, with its distinct strengths, ensures that the project is comprehensive, impactful, and rooted in the real-world challenges of European classrooms.

All materials are available for free download and use through the project website.

https://mentorscape.eucenter.net

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Purpose of the Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to support primary school teachers in recognising, understanding, and reducing bias in their classrooms. Bias awareness is not just a theoretical exercise — it is an essential part of good teaching. Even small, unconscious preferences can influence which students receive attention, encouragement, or discipline, ultimately shaping their educational experience.

In the early years of schooling, children are forming their sense of identity, belonging, and confidence as learners. When bias — whether conscious or unconscious — affects how they are treated, it can limit their participation and achievement. For example, boys may receive more encouragement in science and maths activities, while girls may be praised for being quiet and compliant. Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds might be assumed to have less support at home, leading to lower expectations from teachers. Over time, these patterns can create gaps in learning, motivation, and self-esteem.

This handbook aims to empower teachers with practical strategies to create classrooms where all students are valued and supported equally. It provides clear explanations of bias, examples of how it appears in everyday teaching, and simple tools that can be used immediately to make lessons more inclusive. By engaging with the exercises and activities, teachers will not

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only become more aware of their own practice but also gain confidence in mentoring colleagues and influencing whole-school approaches to inclusion.

How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is designed to be practical and easy to use. You do not need to read it all at once — it can be explored in stages or consulted when a particular issue arises in your classroom. Each section builds on the previous one, so following it in order is helpful, but not essential.

The first part introduces key concepts and explains why bias awareness is such an important part of effective teaching. It also shares real findings from teachers across partner countries, helping you see that these challenges are common and not unique to your school. Later sections focus on best practices and provide ready-to-use tools and activities. These can be implemented directly with your class or used as part of a professional discussion with colleagues.

Throughout the handbook, you will find reflection questions, checklists, and exercises designed to help you think about your own practice. Take time to answer these honestly and without judgment. There are no right or wrong answers — the goal is personal growth. Consider using a notebook or journal to keep track of your reflections and revisit them regularly to monitor your progress.

This resource can be used individually or as part of a team. Many of the activities work well in staff meetings or professional learning communities, where teachers can share experiences and support each other. Schools may also wish to set up informal "bias reflection groups" to create a safe space for ongoing conversations.

Finally, treat this handbook as a living document. You may return to it several times during the school year, adding notes, revising action plans, and trying out different tools as your classroom context changes. The aim is not perfection, but steady improvement and a commitment to fairness for every student.

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Chapter 2: Introduction of the Unconscious Bias Test

Why Exploring Unconscious Bias Matters – For You

Before we talk about bias in education, **let's talk about you**.
Not as a teacher.
Not as a checklist item in a training session.
But as a person—with thoughts, emotions, relationships, and everyday challenges.

You are a teacher, yes. But you're also a human being with habits, instincts, emotions, and experiences that shape how you see and interact with the world. Exploring unconscious bias isn't about pointing fingers or admitting failure—it's about **understanding yourself better**. And that's something that benefits **you**, not just your students.

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You gain self-awareness—and that's powerful

Unconscious biases are not signs of bad character. They're mental shortcuts your brain develops to manage information overload. We all have them. Recognising yours gives you more control over your reactions, your decisions, and even your energy.

You'll start noticing your patterns. For example:

- Why do you feel more comfortable with some students than others?
- Why do you expect more from one group without realising it?
- Why do certain behaviours irritate you more when they come from specific children?

These aren't flaws. They are opportunities for **growth**, and when you spot them, you can choose differently.

You experience calmer relationships, inside and outside school

When you understand your biases, you begin to approach others with **more curiosity and less judgment**. That doesn't just improve your classroom climate—it improves your **personal life**.

You'll find yourself listening more openly in conversations, reacting less defensively, and feeling more grounded in moments of tension. Whether with students, colleagues, family, or friends, bias awareness helps you navigate people with **greater empathy, patience, and peace of mind**.

You grow—personally and professionally

Bias awareness isn't a one-time exercise—it's a mindset shift. And as you explore your own patterns, you become more adaptable, more emotionally intelligent, and more present. These aren't just "teacher skills." They're **life skills**. The kind that help you become not only a better educator, but also a better communicator, partner, parent, or friend.

Most importantly, this growth isn't something you keep to yourself. Your students feel it. Your colleagues notice it. It becomes part of the **learning environment you create every day**.

This journey isn't about fixing yourself. It's about understanding yourself. So you can teach with more confidence. Connect with more compassion. And live with more intention.

Let's begin.

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What Is the Implicit Association Test (IAT)?
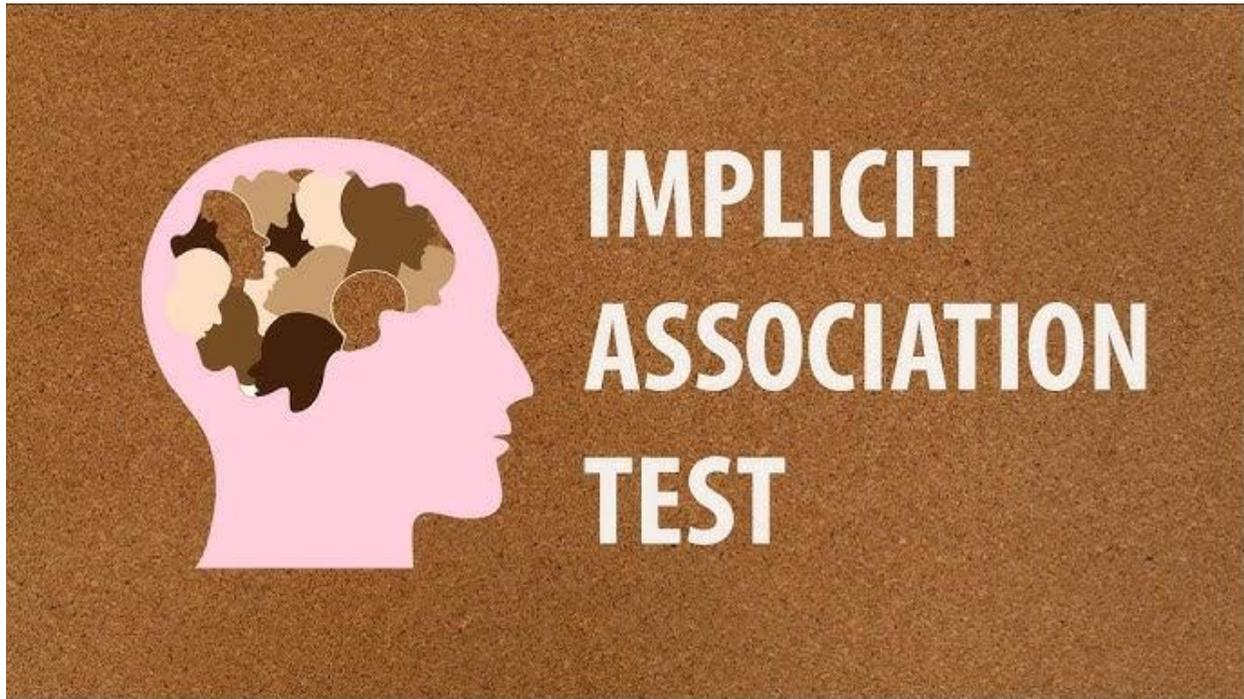
The **Implicit Association Test (IAT)** is a psychological tool designed to reveal the hidden mental associations we all carry—known as **unconscious or implicit biases**. These are the automatic connections our brains make between certain groups of people and specific traits, ideas, or roles. Unlike our conscious beliefs, these biases operate in the background, often without our awareness.

Developed by psychologists at Harvard University and partner institutions, the IAT works by measuring how quickly we associate different concepts. For example, how fast we link words related to "career" with male or female names, or how easily we pair "good" or "bad" with faces of different ethnicities. The faster and more accurately we make these associations, the stronger our brain's unconscious connection between them may be.

The IAT doesn't tell you who you are or what you believe—it simply gives you a **snapshot of your brain's learned patterns**, many of which are shaped by culture, media, and early experiences. For teachers, this is not a judgment—it's a starting point for reflection. The test helps uncover how these hidden associations might influence classroom decisions, student interactions, or expectations, often in ways we don't realise.

In short, the IAT is a mirror—not a verdict. It helps educators better understand how their minds work beneath the surface, so they can teach with greater awareness, intention, and fairness.

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How and Why the IAT Was Created

The **Implicit Association Test (IAT)** was developed in the late 1990s by psychologists **Anthony Greenwald**, **Mahzarin Banaji**, and **Brian Nosek**. Their goal was to create a tool that could **measure attitudes and beliefs people may not even be aware they hold**—what we now call **implicit or unconscious biases**.

At the time, much of psychological research focused on **explicit beliefs**—what people say they think or feel. But the creators of the IAT recognised that people's **automatic, unconscious responses** often reveal something different. These hidden reactions—formed by cultural messages, media, education, and social experience—can influence our behaviour in powerful but invisible ways.

The IAT was designed to make these internal associations **visible through reaction time**. By observing how quickly people pair concepts like "good" or "bad" with categories like "male/female" or "young/old," researchers could detect subtle preferences that individuals may not report—or may not even know they have.

Since its creation, the IAT has been used in **thousands of studies worldwide** to explore implicit attitudes related to race, gender, age, sexuality, disability, religion, and more. It's also used in practical settings like **education, healthcare, law enforcement, and corporate training**—where understanding bias can improve fairness, equity, and human relationships.

In the context of education, the IAT offers teachers a way to **gain self-awareness** without fear or blame. It encourages reflection, not judgement—and supports more **intentional, inclusive, and equitable teaching**.

Purpose of the IAT

Now that we understand why exploring unconscious bias matters on a personal level, let's look at one of the tools that can help us begin: the **Implicit Association Test (IAT)**.

The IAT was developed by researchers at Harvard University and partner institutions as a way to uncover the **automatic associations** our minds make—without us realising it. These hidden preferences or patterns, called **implicit biases**, are shaped by our environment, culture, upbringing, media exposure, and life experiences. They are not chosen, and they do not reflect our values or intentions—but they can influence how we behave.

The purpose of the IAT is to help you **see what your brain is doing in the background**, especially when it comes to concepts like gender, race, age, ability, or career. It gives you a glimpse into your internal "autopilot" system—the associations you've absorbed, even if you consciously believe something different.

For teachers, this is a chance to pause and ask:

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"What assumptions do I carry into the classroom?"
"Do I expect different things from different students—and if so, why?"
"Is it possible that my reactions are shaped by something I haven't noticed before?"

The IAT isn't about labelling or judging you. It's a **tool for insight**. It's designed to prompt reflection—not correction. It doesn't provide answers, but it gives you the questions that really matter—the ones that help you grow.

The **Implicit Association Test (IAT)** is an online activity that helps you explore the hidden associations your brain makes between certain concepts—such as gender and career, race and traits, or age and ability. These associations happen **automatically**, without conscious thought, and they're often shaped by the world around us—media, culture, childhood experiences, or everyday routines.

The IAT works by asking you to complete a series of **quick-response sorting tasks**. You're shown a mix of words or images on your screen—like names, objects, or positive/negative words—and asked to sort them into paired categories by pressing specific keyboard keys.

For example, one version of the test might ask you to quickly group:

- **Male names + Career-related words**
- **Female names + Family-related words**

Then the categories are switched:

- **Female names + Career-related words**
- **Male names + Family-related words**

The test measures **how quickly and accurately** you respond to these combinations. If you respond faster when *male* is paired with *career*, and slower when *female* is paired with *career*, that may suggest an **implicit bias**—an automatic association your brain has made, whether or not you agree with it consciously.

It's important to know that this isn't a test of your values or character. Everyone has unconscious biases. The IAT simply reveals patterns in your **reaction time**, which may reflect long-standing mental associations formed through repetition and exposure.

The test usually takes about **5–10 minutes** and is done privately, online. It's a tool for **self-awareness**, not judgment. And for teachers, it opens the door to valuable reflection:

"Could these unconscious associations be influencing how I respond to students—without me even noticing?"

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What the IAT Measures—and What It Doesn't

The **Implicit Association Test (IAT)** is often misunderstood, so it's important to be clear about what it actually tells you—and what it doesn't.

What the IAT Measures

The IAT measures the **strength of automatic associations** in your brain between different concepts. These associations may reflect **cultural stereotypes**, learned patterns, or repeated messaging you've absorbed throughout your life.

For example:

- How quickly do you associate *female* with *family* vs *female* with *career*?
- How easily do you connect *youth* with *good* vs *old* with *good*?

The key idea is: **the quicker and more accurately you associate two concepts**, the more closely they are linked in your unconscious mind. This doesn't mean you believe those associations—but your brain has learned them over time, often without your awareness.

What the IAT Does *Not* Measure

It's just as important to know what the IAT **does not** do:

- It does **not label you** as racist, sexist, or biased.
- It does **not measure your conscious beliefs** or values.
- It does **not predict your behaviour** in every situation.
- It does **not provide a full picture** of your identity or intentions.

Instead, it provides a **snapshot of internal patterns** that can help you reflect on how your mind works in the background.

Why This Matters in Education?

As a teacher, you may have the best of intentions—and still find that your internal patterns affect:

- Which students you call on more often
- How you respond to challenging behaviour
- Who you praise or expect more from
- How you interpret effort, talent, or motivation

These small moments, repeated daily, can shape a child's confidence, sense of belonging, and opportunities to succeed.

The IAT won't give you all the answers—but it will help you start asking the **right questions**.

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Important Notes and Limitations

The **Implicit Association Test (IAT)** is a powerful tool—but like any tool, it has its **limits**. Understanding these limitations is essential to using the IAT in a meaningful, healthy, and constructive way—especially in the context of education.

It Reveals Patterns, Not Truths

The IAT shows the strength of **automatic mental associations**, not facts about who you are. These associations might reflect years of cultural exposure—not your beliefs, values, or choices.

For example: A teacher who values equality and fairness may still show an implicit preference for one gender or ethnic group, simply because of lifelong social conditioning. That doesn't make them prejudiced—it makes them human.

It's a Starting Point, Not a Diagnosis

The IAT is not a psychological test designed to categorise or diagnose people. It is **not** meant to "expose bias" in a public or confrontational way.

It is best used as a **private, personal reflection tool**—one that invites you to explore your inner responses and think critically about where they might come from and how they show up in daily life.

Results Can Change Over Time

Your IAT results are not fixed. In fact, results can vary depending on your mood, recent experiences, or how often you've reflected on these issues. That's a good thing—it shows that **bias is not permanent**.

By becoming more aware, questioning your instincts, and adjusting your behaviours, you can **shift your automatic responses** over time.

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Use with Care and Compassion

The IAT is most effective when it is introduced with **empathy, clarity, and a growth mindset**. It is not meant to shame or blame—it's meant to open the door to better understanding yourself and others.

Where to Take the IAT

The **Implicit Association Test (IAT)** is freely available online and can be completed at your convenience, in a private and non-judgemental setting. You don't need any special software or registration to take it.

Official Website:

You can access the IAT through **Project Implicit**, a research collaboration involving Harvard University: **https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit**

Once on the website:

1. Click on the **"Take a Test"** section.
2. Select your **language** if available.
3. Choose from a list of tests (each takes about **5–10 minutes**).
4. Follow the simple on-screen instructions.

Recommended Tests for Educators

To support the goals of the *MentorScape* project, we recommend that teachers begin with one or two of the following tests:

- **Gender–Career IAT** – explores associations between gender and work/family roles
- **Race IAT** – explores automatic associations between race and evaluation
- **Age IAT** – reveals associations between age (young vs. old) and preference
- **Disability IAT** – explores attitudes toward people with visible disabilities
- **Skin-Tone IAT** – measures preferences regarding light- vs. dark-skinned individuals

You can choose the ones most relevant to your interests or school context.

Privacy and Participation

- You are not required to provide your name or email to take the test.
- Results are **confidential**—you are the only person who sees them.

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- If you wish, you can print or save your result for **personal reflection** or for use in group discussions or project activities (e.g., anonymous sharing during a training workshop).

Remember: The IAT is a **tool for your own growth**. You are not expected to share your results unless you choose to. In *MentorScape*, we honour that privacy and focus on supporting open, respectful reflection.

Why Presenting the IAT to Primary Teachers is Useful

Unconscious bias isn't just something we carry—it's something that **shows up in the small, everyday decisions** we make. And in a primary school classroom, those decisions matter more than ever.

At this early stage in a child's development, teachers play a crucial role in shaping how students see themselves, how they relate to others, and how they understand the world. That's why introducing the **Implicit Association Test (IAT)** to primary teachers is not only relevant—it's essential.

1. Children Notice Everything—Even What You Don't

Primary-age children are especially sensitive to fairness, attention, and subtle cues. A teacher's tone, body language, or level of patience—often influenced by unconscious biases—can significantly affect a child's sense of **belonging, confidence, and motivation**.

By taking the IAT, teachers can begin to recognise the invisible patterns that may influence these everyday interactions. Awareness is the first step to making sure every child feels **equally seen, valued, and supported**.

2. Biases Start Early—So Should Awareness

We often think of bias as a problem that appears later in life, but research shows that **stereotypes and social assumptions begin forming in early childhood**. That means primary school is a critical time to interrupt these patterns—both in how we teach and what children learn from us.

When teachers understand their own implicit associations, they're better equipped to:

- Avoid reinforcing stereotypes (e.g., "boys are better at maths")
- Offer balanced praise and discipline
- Create an environment where **all students are encouraged to thrive**

3. The IAT Creates a Space for Honest, Non-Judgemental Reflection

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One of the strengths of the IAT is that it offers a **private, low-pressure entry point** into a topic that can feel uncomfortable. It's not a survey or a public test—it's a personal tool that invites reflection without blame.

This makes it a powerful resource for **primary teachers who may never have had formal training on bias**, but who are open to learning more about themselves and growing as professionals.

4. It Aligns with Inclusive Education Goals

The European education agenda—and MentorScape's mission—both emphasise equity, inclusion, and diversity. Presenting the IAT to teachers isn't about compliance. It's about empowering educators to be **proactive contributors to positive change** in their classrooms, schools, and communities.

Primary teachers are role models. The IAT helps them better understand themselves so they can model fairness, respect, and empathy to the next generation.

What's the Benefit of Using the IAT as a Teacher?

Teaching is a demanding job that requires constant decision-making, emotional regulation, and human connection. In that fast-paced environment, it's easy to rely on mental shortcuts—many of which are unconscious. This is where the **Implicit Association Test (IAT)** becomes a valuable tool.

Taking the IAT isn't just about identifying bias—it's about **enhancing your daily practice** and improving how you relate to students, parents, and colleagues. Here's how:

1. It Helps You Understand Your Hidden Habits

We all carry implicit associations—patterns we didn't choose, but which influence how we think and act. The IAT brings these patterns to the surface.

As a teacher, this helps you reflect on:

- Who you call on most in class
- Who gets more patience or encouragement
- How your expectations might differ across gender, background, or personality

This kind of insight is empowering—not because it points out faults, but because it shows you **where you have room to grow**.

2. It Improves Your Awareness in the Moment

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After taking the IAT, you begin noticing your thoughts and reactions more clearly. This makes it easier to **pause and make intentional choices**, even in high-pressure moments.

For example:

- Reframing a reaction before disciplining a child
- Catching yourself when you're about to overlook a quieter student
- Choosing to rotate leadership roles rather than letting stereotypes guide them

This mindfulness leads to **fairer and more balanced teaching**.

3. It Builds Better Relationships with Students and Families

When students feel equally valued, they engage more. When parents sense their child is seen without bias, trust grows. The IAT supports this by helping you **strengthen your empathy, equity, and communication**—even in subtle, everyday ways.

And when relationships improve, so does classroom management, motivation, and overall learning climate.

4. It Supports Your Growth as a Reflective Educator

Education is always evolving—and so are the communities we teach in. Bias awareness keeps you in touch with the **realities of diverse classrooms**, and helps you stay open, flexible, and responsive to student needs.

Taking the IAT shows that you are committed not only to teaching well, but to **teaching fairly**. That's a powerful step in your professional development.

The IAT is not about being perfect. It's about being **present**, **aware**, and **willing to reflect**. The benefit isn't just in the result—it's in the questions it raises, the habits it challenges, and the compassion it strengthens.

For a teacher, those are the tools that **transform classrooms**.

How Primary Teachers Can Use IAT Results in MentorScape

Taking the **Implicit Association Test (IAT)** is just the beginning. What makes the *MentorScape* project unique is that it doesn't stop at self-awareness—it provides the space and support for **turning insight into impact**.

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Here's how primary school teachers can meaningfully use their IAT results within the project framework:

1. Reflect on the Results Privately and Honestly

Your IAT results are for **you alone**—you don't have to share them with anyone unless you choose to. The goal is to reflect honestly:

- What patterns did I see?
- Was anything surprising or uncomfortable?
- How might these associations show up in my classroom?

This reflection can be done through a short guided worksheet, personal journaling, or during structured training discussions. This step lays the foundation for meaningful growth.

2. Connect Results to Real Classroom Practice

Once you've recognised a bias—such as a tendency to associate leadership with boys, or quietness with good behaviour—you can begin to make **small but powerful adjustments** in your teaching.

Examples:

- Varying who leads group activities
- Distributing praise evenly
- Re-examining discipline patterns

These everyday choices contribute to a more inclusive and equitable classroom.

3. Participate in Peer Discussions and Safe Sharing

In *MentorScape* training sessions, teachers will be invited to **discuss general themes and experiences** from their IAT results. These discussions will:

- Stay non-judgemental and confidential
- Help normalise reflection
- Encourage collective problem-solving and empathy

Hearing how others are navigating similar questions helps reduce defensiveness and promotes a supportive culture of growth.

4. Contribute to the MentorScape Handbook and Toolkit

The anonymous insights, classroom examples, and common patterns emerging from IAT reflections will be **integrated into the MentorScape Handbook**. This allows teachers to:

- Share real-life scenarios (anonymously)

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- Shape inclusive teaching strategies
- Help future educators understand the subtle impacts of bias

Your experience becomes part of a **larger, collaborative learning tool** for teachers across Europe.

5. Prepare for Peer Mentorship and School-Wide Impact

Teachers who engage deeply with the IAT and reflection process may go on to become **MentorScape peer mentors**—supporting others in exploring bias, facilitating training activities, and modelling inclusive practice.

In this way, your personal learning can ripple out to benefit your entire school community.

Using your IAT results in *MentorScape* isn't about fixing something broken—it's about **growing from what you discover**, applying it to real teaching, and joining a wider movement of educators committed to fairness, reflection, and inclusion.

Your awareness is the first step. Your action is what truly makes the difference.

How to Engage Resistant or Unaware Teachers

One of the most important—and most sensitive—challenges is supporting teachers who **don't yet recognise the need to explore unconscious bias**. This resistance is normal. It's human. And it doesn't mean those teachers are uncaring or unwilling to improve.

Often, resistance stems from misunderstanding what unconscious bias really is. Many people associate the word "bias" with prejudice or deliberate unfairness—and no teacher wants to be accused of that. Others may genuinely believe they treat all students equally and see no need for reflection. Some may simply be overwhelmed, and see this work as one more burden on an already heavy workload.

That's why the approach to engagement must be **gentle, respectful, and grounded in trust**. The goal is not to push or pressure, but to **invite** reflection and make space for curiosity—not defensiveness. It's also important to acknowledge that bias work can feel personal and uncomfortable, even for those who are open to it. The more we normalise that discomfort as part of growth, the safer the process becomes.

Strategies to Engage Resistant or Unaware Teachers

1. Reframe the Narrative: Bias ≠ Bad Person

One of the most effective ways to lower resistance is to **change the story** around bias. Instead of presenting it as a flaw to fix, present it as a **normal part of being human**.

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Try saying:

"Unconscious bias isn't something you chose—it's something you've absorbed over time. Recognising it helps you take back control."

This neutral, science-based framing turns bias awareness into a **strength**, not a liability. It shows teachers that reflection is part of growth, not a sign of failure.

2. Use Stories Instead of Accusations

Teachers are more open to change when they feel **safe**. Sharing short, relatable classroom stories—whether from peers, mentors, or anonymised examples—helps teachers connect emotionally without feeling targeted.

Example:

"A teacher noticed she was praising boys more often during maths discussions. She hadn't realised it until she looked at her lesson recordings."

Stories like these allow teachers to reflect **without shame** and recognise that bias can be subtle, unintentional, and widespread.

3. Use Peer Models and 'Bias Champions'

People are more likely to engage when the message comes from someone they **know and respect**. In *MentorScape*, your trained peer mentors or early adopters can play a key role by:

- Sharing their own reflections
- Modelling openness and vulnerability
- Encouraging others to try the IAT in a low-pressure way

This builds a culture where bias reflection is **normalized, not marginalised**.

4. Start Small and Voluntary

Instead of launching straight into full workshops or training, start with **gentle entry points**:

- Invite teachers to explore the IAT privately
- Offer reflection questions for their eyes only
- Suggest bias-awareness as part of a broader conversation about student success and well-being

By allowing personal control, teachers are more likely to engage **curiously, not defensively**.

5. Link Bias Awareness to What Teachers Already Care About

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Rather than making bias reflection a standalone issue, show how it **directly impacts things teachers deeply value**, such as:

- Classroom behaviour
- Student engagement
- Academic progress
- Parent relationships
- Fairness and equality in learning opportunities

When teachers understand that bias work **helps them do their job better**, they are more willing to participate.

Resistance to bias work is not a sign of failure—it's an invitation to **meet people where they are**. With empathy, clarity, and the right framing, even the most hesitant teachers can begin their journey of self-awareness.

Your role in *MentorScape* is not to push teachers into uncomfortable places—but to **create environments where it feels safe to grow**.

Awareness is the First Step Toward Change

Exploring unconscious bias is not always easy—but it is always worthwhile. By taking the IAT and engaging in honest reflection, you've already done something many never attempt: you've chosen to look inward with openness, courage, and care.

In *MentorScape*, we believe that **better awareness leads to better teaching**. Every insight you gain, every habit you reconsider, and every small shift you make has the power to create a more inclusive and empowering classroom. The impact may begin with you, but it will be felt by every child you teach.

This chapter isn't the end of the journey—it's the beginning. As you move forward through the project, your growing awareness will shape how you collaborate with peers, contribute to the MentorScape handbook, and support others as mentors of change. And most importantly, it will continue shaping the kind of educator—and person—you strive to be.

Let's continue this journey—thoughtfully, together.

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Chapter 3: Highlighting Common Biases

As part of the MentorScape project, we set out to explore how unconscious and systemic biases affect teaching and learning in early education across different European contexts. Surveys were conducted among teachers in Bulgaria, Portugal, Spain and Türkiye. The purpose was not only to identify the types of bias most present in classrooms, but also to understand how teachers perceive their own role, the impact on students, and the support they need to address these challenges.

The findings provide a valuable snapshot of the realities teachers face: from recognising that bias influences classroom dynamics, to identifying the groups most affected, and acknowledging the gaps in training and institutional support. At the same time, the results highlight a strong willingness among teachers to engage in professional development, mentoring, and peer collaboration.

This analysis brings together national insights and compares them with broader European data, offering both a local and continental perspective. It serves as the foundation for MentorScape's next steps: developing practical resources, training modules, and a teacher guide that directly respond to the needs expressed by educators themselves.

Aanalysis and summary of local survey results

Bulgaria
• **Respondents:** Mostly public school teachers with mixed teaching experience (0–16+ years).
• **Training background:** Some teachers have had prior training, but a considerable number had not. Institutional support is inconsistent.
• **Perception of bias:** Teachers report that bias affects classroom dynamics sometimes to often.
• **Types of bias identified:** Strong prevalence of ethnic/cultural and socioeconomic bias; Roma children and those from poor families were most cited as disadvantaged groups. Language/accent and disability-related bias also appeared.
• **Impact on students:** Most believe bias strongly or moderately affects students, but a small group denied impact.
• **Teacher self-awareness:** Mixed; some confident, others with low awareness (scores varied widely).
• **School environment:** Bias from colleagues observed occasionally to often.
• **Support needed:** Practical classroom activities, tools, and training.
• **Willingness for training:** Majority interested, though a minority hesitant.

Portugal
• Respondents: Experienced public school teachers (mostly 11–16+ years).
• Training background: About half received training; the other half had not. Access to resources uneven.
• Perception of bias: Teachers reported bias sometimes to often, with fewer "never" responses.
• Types of bias identified: Socioeconomic bias dominant, followed by ethnic/cultural (Roma students often mentioned). Disabilities and physical differences were also noted.
• Impact on students: Many believe students are moderately affected by bias, though some teachers denied any impact.
• Teacher self-awareness: Confidence levels varied (scores from 1 to 5), but generally medium to high.
• School environment: Bias by colleagues observed occasionally; some said they never witnessed it.
• Support needed: Specific training, more literature, awareness resources.
• Willingness for training: Majority "Yes" or "Maybe," though a small group resistant.

Türkiye
• Respondents: 19 public school teachers, all with 11–15 years' experience.
• Training background: Only 2 had received training on inclusion or bias; only 3 had resources.
• Perception of bias: Nearly all confirmed bias affects classrooms (often or always).
• Types of bias identified: Ethnic/cultural discrimination dominant; also gender, language/accent, socioeconomic, disability.
• Impact on students: Overwhelming agreement that unconscious bias negatively impacts students.
• Teacher self-awareness: High confidence (avg. ~4.3/5) and awareness (~4.5/5).
• School environment: Bias by colleagues observed sometimes by most.
• Affected groups: Refugee/foreign students, low-income children, culturally diverse, disabled, academically weaker students.

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• Support needed: Expert training, classroom-ready resources, psychological tools, peer discussions.
• Willingness for training: Strong interest (10 yes, 7 maybe).

Spain
• Respondents: Mix of primary school teachers, many with significant experience.
• Training background: Training on bias and inclusion exists but is uneven; more common in urban vs rural schools.
• Perception of bias: Teachers often report bias as an ongoing issue, especially in multicultural classrooms.
• Types of bias identified: Immigrant/ethnic minority students (Latin American, North African, Roma), language/accent, and socioeconomic background. Gender bias also noted (stereotypes in STEM, boys vs girls expectations).
• Impact on students: Widely acknowledged that bias impacts achievement, motivation, and participation.
• Teacher self-awareness: Moderate to high; many reflect on bias but lack practical strategies.
• School environment: Observed bias from colleagues, especially around immigrant integration and low-income students.
• Support needed: Practical training, multicultural pedagogy, and inclusive classroom materials.
Willingness for training: Generally high, especially in schools with higher immigrant populations.

Common Findings Across All Countries

The survey results from Bulgaria, Portugal, Türkiye, and Spain reveal strikingly similar patterns. Teachers across contexts agree that bias—whether conscious or unconscious—remains a significant factor influencing classroom dynamics and student outcomes. Vulnerable groups such as students from low-income families, ethnic and cultural minorities (including Roma and immigrant/refugee students), and children with disabilities are consistently identified as the most disadvantaged. While many teachers show personal awareness of bias, they lack structured training, institutional support, and practical tools to address it effectively. Bias is perceived not only at the individual level but also within wider school environments, pointing to systemic challenges. Importantly, educators in all four countries express a strong interest in training and mentorship opportunities.

1. **Bias is recognised as a real issue in classrooms**
   o Teachers in every country agree that conscious and unconscious bias affects classroom dynamics.
   o None of the surveys suggest bias is "non-existent"; denial is rare.
2. **Training and institutional support are insufficient**
   o Across all contexts, teachers report **gaps in training** on inclusion, diversity, and bias.
   o Even when some training exists (Portugal, Bulgaria, Spain), it is inconsistent or limited in depth.
   o Türkiye stands out with almost no training, but the overall pattern is the same: teachers feel underprepared.
3. **Certain student groups are consistently most disadvantaged**

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- o **Socioeconomically disadvantaged students** (low-income families)
- o **Ethnic/cultural minorities** (Roma in Bulgaria & Portugal; immigrant/refugee groups in Spain & Türkiye)
- o **Students with disabilities**
- o These groups repeatedly appear as the most vulnerable in all four countries.
4. **Teachers acknowledge impact on students**
- o Majority believe unconscious bias negatively influences student outcomes (motivation, participation, academic achievement).
- o Levels vary (moderate vs strong impact), but the consensus is that bias has real consequences.
5. **Teachers show personal awareness but lack tools**
- o Most feel somewhat confident in recognising their own biases.
- o However, they lack **practical classroom strategies** and institutional backing to act effectively.
- o Teachers ask for **hands-on resources, training, and peer support**.
6. **Bias is not only individual but systemic**
- o Many teachers reported observing bias from colleagues and within school environments.
- o This indicates the problem goes beyond personal attitudes and includes institutional culture.
7. **Strong interest in capacity-building**
- o Across all four countries, most teachers express willingness to participate in **training and mentorship programmes**.
- o Even when some answered "Maybe," there was no strong resistance to the idea.

All four countries reveal the same pattern: bias is widespread, under-addressed in training, disproportionately affects vulnerable groups, and teachers are aware yet lack institutional tools.

Main differences between the four countries' survey results

While all countries recognise bias as a problem, **the focus of concern differs**: Roma in Bulgaria/Portugal, refugees in Türkiye, immigrants & gender in Spain. **Training gaps are universal but unequal**, with Spain somewhat ahead, Türkiye most underserved. **Teacher attitudes also vary** — highly reflective in Türkiye, more divided in Bulgaria, moderate in Portugal and Spain.

- **Training availability:** Spain > Portugal > Bulgaria > Türkiye.
- **Bias focus:**
  - o Bulgaria → Roma students & poverty
  - o Portugal → Socioeconomic status & Roma
  - o Türkiye → Ethnic/cultural (esp. refugees/foreigners) + gender
  - o Spain → Immigrant/ethnic minorities & gender stereotypes
- **Perception of bias impact:** Strongest in Türkiye and Spain, more moderate in Portugal, slightly more contested in Bulgaria.
- **Teacher confidence:** Highest in Türkiye (self-reflection), most varied in Bulgaria, moderate in Portugal/Spain.

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- **Support needs:**
  - Bulgaria & Portugal → Practical classroom tools
  - Türkiye → Expert seminars & psychological insights
  - Spain → Multicultural pedagogy & inclusive curriculum materials

Comparison of results with data from other European countries

When comparing the MentorScape survey findings with wider European data, several parallels and nuances emerge. Across Europe, research confirms that **socioeconomic background, ethnicity, and migration status** are strong predictors of unequal treatment in schools. OECD's PISA 2022 report highlights that students from low-income families and those with an immigrant background consistently perform below their peers, with part of this gap linked to **biased teacher expectations** and differential support. This aligns closely with our survey results from Bulgaria, Portugal, Türkiye, and Spain, where Roma, immigrant/refugee, and low-income children were repeatedly identified as the most disadvantaged.

European studies also shed light on **systemic patterns of bias**. A recent JRC factorial experiment with Spanish pre-service teachers showed that girls and students with "highbrow cultural capital" were often graded more favourably, while boys, migrants, and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds faced **lower long-term expectations**. This mirrors MentorScape's finding that while teachers acknowledge bias, their responses differ in intensity and often underestimate **gender dynamics**, which European evidence shows are significant across countries such as France, the Netherlands, and the UK.

Another layer comes from **structural and institutional contexts**. Eurydice's 2023 report found that while diversity and inclusion are increasingly addressed in European teacher training, provision remains patchy and varies widely between countries. MentorScape results reflect this: Spain and Portugal showed some exposure to training, Bulgaria reported inconsistent provision, and Türkiye displayed almost no access. This confirms that teacher preparedness for inclusive practice remains uneven across Europe.

European research nuances our understanding of bias by pointing out **measurement error effects**. A 2024 Dutch study revealed that part of the apparent teacher bias in track recommendations for low-SES students was due to errors in test score measurement, explaining up to 43% of the observed gap. While our MentorScape surveys did not capture this technical dimension, it suggests that tackling bias must go hand in hand with ensuring fair and accurate assessment tools.

The MentorScape survey results strongly resonate with broader European evidence: bias is widely acknowledged, affects similar vulnerable groups, and is compounded by training gaps. Where MentorScape contributes is in bringing teachers' own voices to light—confirming trends observed in large-scale studies while showing their practical implications in classrooms.

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Conclusions

The results of the survey confirm that bias in education is a shared European challenge. Across all participating countries, teachers recognise that students from vulnerable groups – including those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, immigrant or refugee children, Roma students, and those with disabilities – face barriers that affect their educational opportunities. These barriers influence classroom dynamics, academic outcomes, and students' sense of belonging.

The survey also revealed that teacher training on inclusion and bias is insufficient and unevenly distributed. While some teachers in Spain and Portugal report receiving training on these topics, in Bulgaria provision remains inconsistent, and in Türkiye there are significant gaps. This reflects a wider European pattern, where training exists but often lacks systematic implementation or follow-up.

Another key finding is that teachers are aware of bias but often lack practical tools to address it. Most feel capable of recognising bias in themselves and others, yet they lack classroom-ready strategies, institutional support, and clear policies to guide their response. This means that awareness does not always lead to concrete change in daily teaching practice.

The survey also highlights that bias is not just an individual issue but a systemic one. Teachers report witnessing bias not only in their own attitudes but also in colleagues' behaviour and in wider school culture. This calls for approaches that combine personal reflection with school-level initiatives to create sustainable change.

The data reveals a strong willingness to learn. Teachers across all countries expressed a clear interest in training, mentorship, and collaborative peer learning. This is an encouraging foundation for MentorScape's impact and shows that educators are ready to engage with the topic when given the right resources.

Next Steps: From Awareness to Action

These findings guide the next part of this handbook, which moves from analysis to practical solutions. Teachers need more than awareness – they need concrete, evidence-based tools and activities that they can use immediately in their classrooms. The following section introduces a curated set of best practices, activities, and reflection exercises designed to support teachers in addressing bias, promoting inclusion, and developing mentorship skills. These tools will form the backbone of future teacher trainings and peer-support initiatives, ensuring that the work of recognising and reducing bias is not a one-time exercise but an ongoing part of professional practice.

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Chapter 4: Best Practices to Counter Bias

Self-Reflection & Awareness Tools

Before teachers can change classroom practices, they must first understand their own thinking patterns. The self-reflection and awareness tools in this section help teachers uncover unconscious assumptions, notice daily decision-making habits, and build greater awareness of how bias may influence their interactions with students. These tools are designed to be non-judgmental and supportive, offering private spaces for honest reflection. They work well as individual exercises or as discussion starters in small groups, helping teachers gradually shift from simply recognising bias to actively challenging it in their practice.

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Title of the tool	**Uncovering Your Implicit Biases: An Exercise for Teachers**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	In-group/out-group (othering), language/accent, cultural generalisations, affinity bias, confirmation bias
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher (individual reflective practice)
Description of how the tool works	A guided self-reflection tool where teachers work through eight thoughtful prompts to uncover subtle biases and patterns in their thoughts and interactions. It encourages awareness of who is considered "us" vs "them," usage of generalisations, responses to accents, representation in media, and who receives unearned leniency.
Steps for implementation	1. Create a Safe Reflection Space Allocate quiet, judgement-free time to reflect on a series of self-awareness prompts related to your personal circle, generalisations, empathy, media consumption, and perceptions of others. This is a personal exercise with no right or wrong answers—honesty is key. 2. Answer the Self-Reflection Questions Work through questions exploring topics such as: The diversity of your social and professional circles. How you categorise people as "us" vs. "them." Use of generalisations (e.g. "they always…"). Responses to people with accents or differing communication styles. Whose mistakes you tend to excuse more easily. Triggers for judgement or non-acceptance. How often you engage with cross-cultural books, films, or news. 3. Reflect on Your Findings

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	Accept that discovering bias is part of growth. Avoid guilt or defensiveness. Use insights to motivate change, starting with your own practices before encouraging change in others.
	4. Apply Practical, Low-Stress Strategies Begin integrating equity-based practices into your classroom, such as:
	Broadening your interactions outside your usual circles.
	Intentionally building relationships with students you feel less connected to.
	Tracking media consumption and reducing biased content.
	Identifying communication vs. content barriers in student learning.
	Logging classroom behaviour corrections and analysing patterns.
	Reviewing curriculum materials for bias and missing perspectives.
	5. Avoid Common Pitfalls Stay open to evolving knowledge. Don't become defensive when corrected; instead, apologise and ask how to improve. Avoid excuse-making—bias awareness requires humility and continual learning.
Source	https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/blindspots

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Title of the tool	**Understanding Teacher Bias**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Implicit and explicit bias: age, gender, race, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, language/accents, ability
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teachers (individual reflection, training, peer discussion)
Description of how the tool works	A structured reflection and action guide prompting teachers to identify biases (both conscious and unconscious) and implement inclusive teaching strategies. Emphasis is on recognizing assumptions, deepening relationships with students, avoiding generalisations, and ensuring equity in expectations and resources
Steps for implementation	**Acknowledge Personal Bias** Begin by recognising that everyone holds unconscious biases. Understand that having biases does not make you a bad teacher, but ignoring them can negatively affect your students. **Build Stronger Relationships** Make intentional efforts to connect with students from diverse backgrounds. Learn about their cultures, interests, and learning needs to create a more inclusive classroom environment. **Celebrate, Don't Ignore, Differences** Avoid "colourblind" language. Instead, embrace diversity by acknowledging cultural holidays, using inclusive materials, and encouraging students to share their backgrounds. **Set Fair and High Expectations** Maintain high expectations for all students, regardless of learning difficulties or backgrounds. Offer additional support when needed, but never lower your standards. **Reflect Using the Implicit Association Test (IAT)** Take the IAT (available online) to uncover your own unconscious biases. Use your results as a starting point for personal growth and to adjust your teaching strategies. **Review and Adapt Teaching Materials** Evaluate your textbooks, visuals, and learning resources to ensure they reflect the diversity of your classroom. Include voices and stories from a wide range of cultures, genders, and abilities.

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Source	
	https://www.learninga-z.com/site/resources/breakroom-blog/understanding-teacher-bias

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Title of the tool	**Me / They / We Reflection Strategy**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Unconscious bias in teacher responses and classroom management
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher (self-reflection immediately after a classroom incident)
Description of how the tool works	A quick mental framework teachers use during a student behaviour incident to check if their reaction comes from personal bias, student impact, or shared classroom norms. By asking three simple questions, teachers gain clarity on whether a reaction is necessary or influenced by unconscious assumptions.
Steps for implementation	1. Observe a student's behaviour that feels distracting or concerning. 2. Ask: Me – Am I the only one distracted or bothered? 3. Ask: They – Is the student's behaviour actually hindering their task? 4. Ask: We – Is the behaviour distracting others in the class? 5. If "yes" beyond Me, respond; if not, reconsider whether intervention is needed. 6. Reflect later on any patterns.
Source	https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/checking-yourself-for-bias-in-the-classroom

Title of the tool	**Socio-Economic Bias Self-Reflection Checklist**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Socio-economic background (can also apply to race, language, and ability)
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher (self-reflection before/after lessons)
Description of how the tool works	This is a simple self-reflection checklist that teachers can use before or after teaching to become more aware of how socio-economic biases may affect their expectations, language, and classroom interactions. It encourages brief, focused reflection on equity and inclusion.
Steps for implementation	1. Read through the checklist before or after a lesson. 2. Reflect honestly on your own classroom behaviour and assumptions. 3. Discuss with a peer or mentor if possible. 4. Repeat regularly to build self-awareness over time.
Source	Edutopia (2021). A Simple Way to Self-Monitor for Bias by Jay Wamsted. https://www.edutopia.org/article/simple-way-self-monitor-bias

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Title of the tool	**Mirror, Mirror – A Daily Reflection Checklist**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Type of bias addressed: Gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, disability
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher
Description of how the tool works	This is a short, daily self-reflection checklist that teachers complete at the end of the school day. It prompts awareness of personal attitudes, interaction patterns, and classroom choices that may unintentionally reflect bias.
Steps for implementation	Print or copy the checklist onto a half-page form. At the end of each day, take 5 minutes to respond to questions like: Did I call on a diverse mix of students today? Did I interrupt or speak differently to any student group? Did I make any assumptions based on appearance, speech, or behavior? Keep weekly reflections to identify patterns and set goals for change. Revisit monthly to measure progress.
Source	Adapted from anti-bias education practices (custom tool)

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Title of the tool	**"Bias Jar" Daily Reflection**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	General unconscious bias
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher
Description of how the tool works	This low-effort, high-impact tool encourages daily micro-reflections by teachers on their decisions and interactions, helping them build bias-awareness habits over time.
Steps for implementation	Provide each teacher with a small "bias jar" (physical or metaphorical). Each day, teachers write down one interaction or decision where they questioned their neutrality (e.g. whom they called on most, whom they praised, whom they disciplined). After 1–2 weeks, hold a group meeting. Teachers read through their notes and share themes or surprises they found. Discuss strategies to be more intentional and equitable in future interactions.
Source	Widely used in diversity, equity, and inclusion teacher training workshops; compiled and adapted for Mentorscape project.

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Title of the tool	**Bias Reflection Journaling**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	General unconscious bias (all types)
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher
Description of how the tool works	This tool promotes deep personal reflection and self-awareness by guiding teachers through structured journaling prompts based on bias-related experiences and observations in the classroom.
Steps for implementation	Provide each teacher with a reflection guide or journal prompts (e.g. "When have I made an assumption about a student?" "What biases may influence how I give praise or discipline?"). Allocate quiet time (15–20 mins) for individual journaling. Optionally, divide into pairs or small groups to discuss insights. Encourage teachers to set one personal bias-awareness goal for the next month.
Source	Widely used in diversity, equity, and inclusion teacher training workshops; compiled and adapted for Mentorscape project.

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Classroom Observation & Peer Support Tools

Bias reduction becomes more powerful when teachers support each other. The tools in this section focus on structured observation, constructive feedback, and peer collaboration. They help create a culture where teachers can safely observe one another, reflect together, and share strategies for inclusive practice. These activities promote teamwork, encourage professional dialogue, and ensure that bias awareness does not remain a personal exercise but becomes a shared responsibility within the whole school.

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Title of the tool	**Bias-Aware Classroom Observation Checklist**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Observer biases including personal affinity bias, halo/horn effects, cultural bias, and confirmation bias
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher evaluators, school leaders, or peers conducting classroom observations
Description of how the tool works	This tool provides educators with a structured pre- and post-observation checklist aimed at mitigating unconscious bias. By using standardized criteria and techniques like double coding and reflection, observers can reduce the influence of personal assumptions and prior impressions on their assessment of teaching quality.
Steps for implementation	Use standardized observation protocols with clear parameters and scoring guidelines. Undergo training focused on recognizing and managing implicit biases. Implement double coding: two independent observers evaluate the same lesson separately. Use a bias checklist before and after observations to flag potential bias triggers. Engage in reflective practice—journaling or colleague discussions—to surface and address bias over time.
Source	Solender, M. (2025). Avoiding Implicit Bias in Classroom Observations. Student Behavior Blog. Retrieved from https://studentbehaviorblog.org/avoiding-implicit-bias-in-classroom-observations/

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Title of the tool	**Equitable Feedback Loop**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Gender / Socio-economic Background
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher
Description of how the tool works	This is a structured self-reflection tool that helps teachers analyse the type and frequency of feedback (praise, correction, redirection) they give to different students. Unconscious biases can lead teachers to praise some children for effort while others are praised only for perfect results, or to give more corrective feedback to certain groups. This tool encourages balanced and growth-oriented feedback for all.
Steps for implementation	Choose a Focus Period: Pick a specific block of teaching time (e.g., a 30-minute lesson, or a morning activity session).
	Simple Chart/Mental Tally: Keep a mental note or a quick discreet tally on a small notepad for 3-5 students (choose a mix of genders, a vocal child, a quiet child, etc.).
	Track Feedback Types: For each student, note down if your feedback was:
	Specific Praise for Effort/Process: (e.g., "You really persevered with that challenging puzzle!" or "I like how you listened carefully to your friend's idea.")
	General Praise for Outcome: (e.g., "Good job!" or "That's lovely!")
	1. Corrective/Redirection (Academic): (e.g., "Let's try that sum again," or "Can you tell me more about that idea?")
	2. Corrective/Redirection (Behavioural): (e.g., "Please sit down," or "Stop talking.")

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	3. Reflect and Compare: After the session, review your notes:
	4. Did certain students receive more behavioural corrections than academic ones?
	5. Did you praise effort equally across all students, regardless of gender or background?
	6. Were you more specific in your praise/correction for some students than others?
	7. Adjust Practice: Based on your reflection, consciously work on diversifying your feedback, focusing more on effort and process for all children, and ensuring an equitable balance of positive reinforcement and constructive guidance.
Source	Based on educational psychology research on effective feedback and unconscious bias in teacher-student interactions, often incorporated into teacher professional development modules across Europe to promote equitable learning opportunities.

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Title of the tool	**Accessibility Audit for All**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Disability
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher + Whole Class
Description of how the tool works	This tool involves a simple, regular audit of the physical and instructional accessibility of the classroom environment and activities. It encourages teachers to view their classroom through the lens of a child with diverse abilities (e.g., mobility issues, visual/hearing impairments, neurodiversity) to ensure no child is inadvertently excluded.
Steps for implementation	1. Walk-Through with a Focus: Regularly Walk around the classroom, pretending you are a child with different needs: • If you use a wheelchair: Can you easily move between all areas? Can you reach all materials? • If you have low vision: Can you see all the signs and displays clearly? Is there too much visual clutter? • If you have difficulty processing auditory information: Are instructions always verbal, or are there visual aids too? Is the classroom often too noisy? 2. Material Check: • Are scissors, pencils, and other tools easy for all children to grasp? • Are there alternative ways to participate in activities (e.g., drawing instead of writing, pointing instead of speaking)? 3. Instructional Clarity: • Are instructions given verbally and visually (e.g., written steps, pictures)? • Do you allow for different paces of work? 4. Peer Inclusion: Discuss with students how they can support classmates with different needs to participate fully in games and activities.

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Source	Derived from Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and inclusive education policies widely adopted across Europe, aiming to remove barriers to learning for all students. This is a common focus in special educational needs (SEN) training for mainstream teachers.

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Title of the tool	**The Equity Circle – Student Participation Tracker**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Gender, language/accent, ethnicity
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher
Description of how the tool works	This is a visual tool for teachers to track classroom participation and ensure all voices are being heard. It helps teachers notice who they call on most often and whether any groups are unintentionally overlooked.
Steps for implementation	Draw a circle with each student's name around the edge. During a lesson, place a tick next to the name each time a student participates or is called on. At the end of the week, review the sheet to identify patterns (e.g., some students dominating, others being ignored). Adjust your questioning strategies accordingly for balanced inclusion.
Source	Adapted from culturally responsive teaching tools

Curriculum & Lesson Audit Tools

Many biases are hidden not in teacher behaviour, but in the teaching materials themselves. The curriculum and lesson audit tools help teachers examine textbooks, worksheets, and classroom resources to identify whose voices are represented, whose are missing, and whether stereotypes are being reinforced. By using these tools, teachers can make small but meaningful adjustments to create a more inclusive curriculum that reflects diverse cultures, genders, and perspectives.

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Title of the tool	**Tools & Guidance for Evaluating Bias in Instructional Materials**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Cultural, socio-economic, racial/ethnic, gender, ability, language/accent
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher-led curriculum teams (e.g. teachers, librarians, curriculum coordinators)
Description of how the tool works	A set of structured rubrics and guiding questions to help educators systematically review written and visual instructional materials, identifying biases, omissions, stereotypes, and lack of diversity in perspectives. The tools vary by focus area but all aim to support reflective evaluation of curriculum content.
Steps for implementation	1. Assemble a review team of educators and curriculum staff. 2. Select instructional materials such as textbooks, stories, assessments, visuals 3. Use the rubric to assess content across areas like representation, stereotypes, omissions, accuracy. 4. Record observations and identify patterns of bias or imbalance. 5. Discuss findings and plan adjustments or supplementary materials to improve inclusivity. 6. Apply across multiple resources and revisit periodically.
Source	https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/ejroc/services/culturally-responsive-curriculum-scorecards

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Title of the tool	**Mirror Mapping – Curriculum Representation Audit**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Cultural, ethnicity, language/accent, socio-economic background
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher
Description of how the tool works	This tool helps teachers assess whether their teaching materials reflect diverse perspectives and identities. It aims to reduce representation bias and ensure students see themselves reflected in the curriculum.
Steps for implementation	Ask teachers to bring a current lesson plan, textbook, or worksheet. Provide a checklist with prompts like: Whose voices are present in the material? Are there diverse names, backgrounds, or family structures? Are there stereotypes or omissions? In pairs, teachers assess their material using the checklist. Each pair suggests one revision to make the content more inclusive. Close with group sharing of ideas for curriculum improvement.
Source	Widely used in diversity, equity, and inclusion teacher training workshops; compiled and adapted for Mentorscape project.

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Title of the tool	**Bias in the Curriculum – Missing Voices**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Cultural, historical, ethnic, socio-economic background
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher
Description of how the tool works	This tool focuses on reviewing curricular materials to identify whose voices and perspectives are missing, and to encourage more inclusive lesson planning.
Steps for implementation	Teachers choose a lesson, book, or history topic they teach. Ask: Whose perspective is told? Who is missing? Are multiple cultural or socio-economic voices represented? Teachers brainstorm one way to add a missing voice, e.g. alternative readings, local stories, primary sources. Share in pairs and create a mini action plan to implement this change.
Source	Widely used in diversity, equity, and inclusion teacher training workshops; compiled and adapted for Mentorscape project.

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Classroom Activities for Teachers & Students

Sometimes the best way to understand bias is to experience it in action. The classroom activities in this section are interactive and engaging, helping teachers and students explore assumptions, stereotypes, and fairness in a safe, reflective way. These activities can be used during lessons, team-building sessions, or special projects to start meaningful conversations about diversity and equity. Each activity is designed to be simple to implement, requiring minimal materials and preparation, making them ideal for busy teachers.

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Title of the tool	**The Doctor's Son Scenario**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Gender bias, unconscious assumptions
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher
Description of how the tool works	This classic scenario challenges participants' automatic assumptions about gender roles, particularly in professions. The surprising twist reveals how ingrained gender expectations can affect our perceptions — a dynamic that also plays out in classroom settings.
Steps for implementation	Present the scenario aloud: "A father and his son are in a car crash. The father dies. The son is taken to hospital. The surgeon says, 'I can't operate on this boy – he is my son.'" Ask participants: How is this possible? (Let them guess.) Reveal the answer: The surgeon is the boy's mother. Facilitate a group discussion about initial assumptions, gender roles, and how similar assumptions can affect teacher expectations. Ask teachers to reflect: Have I ever expected different behaviour or performance based on gender?
Source	Widely used in diversity, equity, and inclusion teacher training workshops; compiled and adapted for Mentorscape project.

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Title of the tool	**Bias Bingo**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Socio-economic, cultural, language/accent, classroom expectation bias
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher
Description of how the tool works	Bias Bingo is a reflective icebreaker that helps teachers identify how often they encounter or commit small acts of bias. It promotes conversation and self-awareness in a non-judgemental way.
Steps for implementation	Distribute a Bingo card filled with bias-related prompts such as: "I've assumed a student didn't have support at home." "I've praised students differently based on behaviour." "I've mispronounced a student's name and didn't correct it." Teachers circulate and find colleagues who've experienced these. Once a row is filled, the activity pauses. In pairs or small groups, discuss which biases were most common and surprising. Wrap up with a full-group reflection about what to be more aware of going forward.
Source	Widely used in diversity, equity, and inclusion teacher training workshops; compiled and adapted for Mentorscape project.

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Title of the tool	**Scenario Sorting – Bias or Not?**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Socio-economic, language/accent, behavioural, ethnicity
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher
Description of how the tool works	Teachers examine real-life classroom scenarios and decide whether bias is present. This helps sharpen recognition of subtle or "everyday" forms of bias.
Steps for implementation	Prepare cards or a worksheet with various short scenarios. Example: "A teacher assumes a child can't afford lunch due to their clothes." "A student who is quiet and well-dressed is assumed to be high-achieving." In small groups, teachers sort the scenarios into "biased," "not biased," or "unsure." Facilitate a discussion on each scenario and reflect on why some biases are harder to spot. Conclude with strategies for avoiding snap judgements.
Source	Widely used in diversity, equity, and inclusion teacher training workshops; compiled and adapted for Mentorscape project.

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Title of the tool	**"Who Am I?" Labels Game**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Ethnicity, cultural background, language/accent, appearance-based bias
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher
Description of how the tool works	This classic game demonstrates how quickly assumptions are formed based on stereotypes, especially when identity is reduced to a label. It encourages teachers to reflect on implicit associations and judgments.
Steps for implementation	Prepare sticky notes with various labels (e.g. "immigrant," "honours student," "non-native speaker," "quiet," "troublemaker").
	Without seeing their label, each teacher wears one on their forehead.
	Teachers mingle and interact based on each other's label.
	After 10 minutes, they guess their label.
	Debrief: Discuss how being treated based on assumptions felt — and how students might feel similarly.
Source	Widely used in diversity, equity, and inclusion teacher training workshops; compiled and adapted for Mentorscape project.

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Title of the tool	**Our Diverse Class Storybook**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Ethnicity and Culture
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Whole Class activity
Description of how the tool works	The class collectively creates a physical or digital storybook where each student contributes a page or two about their unique background. This could include drawings and simple sentences about their family's traditions, favourite foods, languages spoken at home, or celebrations. The teacher acts as a facilitator, providing prompts and ensuring a safe space for sharing.
Steps for implementation	1. Introduce the Concept: Explain to the class that everyone has a unique story and background, and that learning about each other makes the class stronger and more interesting. 2. Teacher Models: The teacher shares their own page first, including aspects of their heritage or culture. 3. Student Contribution: Provide templates (paper or digital) for students to draw and write. Prompts could include: "A special day my family celebrates," "A unique food my family eats," "Words we say in another language at home," or "A tradition from my family's country." 4. Assembly and Sharing: Compile the pages into a class storybook. Dedicate time for students to share their page with the class, fostering understanding and appreciation. 5. Ongoing Resource: Keep the book in the classroom library for students to read and revisit throughout the year.
Source	Adapted from culturally responsive teaching practices and community-building activities in early years education across Europe, often seen in schools with diverse student populations

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Title of the tool	**Beyond Blue & Pink**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Gender
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher (Classroom organisation) + Students (Engagement in activities).
Description of how the tool works	This tool involves a deliberate and ongoing effort to diversify the appeal and perceived "ownership" of classroom activity centres or play areas, ensuring they don't subtly reinforce gender stereotypes. It means actively making all centres inviting and relevant to all children, regardless of gender
Steps for implementation	1. Audit Centres: Review existing centres (e.g., kitchen/home corner, construction area, art station, reading nook). 2. Introduce Non-Stereotypical Props: • Kitchen/Home Corner: Add tools, maps, science instruments, or items related to traditionally male-dominated professions. • Construction Area: Introduce fabrics, dolls, or items for creative storytelling, not just building. • Art/Creative Areas: Ensure a balance of materials that appeal beyond traditional "crafts," like technical drawing tools or architectural models. 3. Teacher Modelling: Actively observe and participate in all centres, encouraging both boys and girls to engage with all types of materials and activities. For example, a male teacher might engage in pretend play in the home corner, or a female teacher might lead a construction project. 4. Inclusive Language: Use gender-neutral language when referring to activities ("Who wants to build something amazing?" instead of "Boys, the blocks are over here."). 5. Rotate Roles: If centres involve roles, ensure these are rotated equally among genders.

Source	A common practice in early childhood education (ECE) within progressive European frameworks, emphasizing anti-bias education and gender equality, often cited by organisations like UNESCO and national curriculum guidelines focusing on inclusion

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Title of the tool	**Fair Share**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Socio-economic Background
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher (Self-reflection/Observation).
Description of how the tool works	This is a simple, non-intrusive tally system for teachers to monitor their own engagement patterns with students during discussions, question-and-answer sessions, or group work check-ins. It helps reveal if certain students (e.g., those from less privileged backgrounds who might be quieter, or those with different accents who might be overlooked) are receiving disproportionately less attention or fewer opportunities to speak.
Steps for implementation	1. Choose a Focus Time: Select a specific activity or part of the day (e.g., morning meeting, maths discussion, story time Q&A) for observation. 2. Simple Tally System: Create a simple chart with student names (or just a male/female column if focusing on gender, or "quiet/vocal" if focusing on participation style). 3. Mark Interactions: As you facilitate, make a quick tally mark next to a student's name each time you: • Ask them a direct question. • Give them individual positive feedback. • Initiate a brief one-on-one conversation. • Listen to their unprompted contribution. 4. Reflect and Adjust: After the session, quickly review the tallies. Identify any students who received significantly fewer interactions. Consciously plan to engage them more directly in subsequent sessions. The goal isn't perfect equality every time, but consistent awareness and a deliberate effort to balance engagement.

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Source	Based on effective teaching practices for equitable classrooms, particularly in contexts of diverse learners, recommended by educational researchers and professional development programmes focusing on equitable access and opportunity in the classroom

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Title of the tool	**My Language, Our Bridge**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Language/Accent and Culture
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher + Students
Description of how the tool works	Create a living, evolving "word wall" or interactive glossary in the classroom that features key vocabulary words (e.g., "hello," "thank you," "friend," "book," "water") in Portuguese and the various home languages of the students in the class. Children are encouraged to teach words from their own languages. This validates and celebrates the linguistic diversity of the classroom, showing that all languages are valued and useful. It can also include simple phonetics for pronunciation.
Steps for implementation	1.Identify Home Languages: discreetly identify the different languages spoken by students and their families in the classroom. 2.Start with Core Words: Begin with a few essential words (e.g., greetings, common classroom objects, feelings). 3.Invite Contributions: Invite students (and their families, if comfortable) to share how to say these words in their home languages. Model pronunciation. 4.Create the Wall/Glossary: Write the Portuguese word, the foreign language equivalent, and perhaps a simple phonetic guide or a small drawing. Use different colours for each language. 5.Daily Integration: Regularly refer to the word wall. Use greetings in different languages during morning circle. Encourage children to use words from the wall.

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	6.Celebrate Accents: Explicitly discuss that people speak languages with different accents, and all accents are beautiful and part of who we are.
Source	A key strategy in multilingual and intercultural education, strongly advocated by European policies on linguistic diversity and inclusion. Many Portuguese schools with diverse student populations actively implement such practices, often linked to the "Ensino Português no Estrangeiro" (Portuguese Teaching Abroad) initiatives or general inclusive education guidelines.

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Title of the tool	**My Name, My Story**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Ethnicity, language/accent, cultural background
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Teacher + students
Description of how the tool works	A storytelling activity where students share the meaning or origin of their names. This encourages cultural appreciation and helps reduce biases related to unfamiliar names or accents.
Steps for implementation	Invite students to ask their families about their names and bring a story or meaning. Over a week, allow each student to share in a morning circle or story time. Teachers reflect on whether they've unconsciously mispronounced or avoided certain names. Create a name display celebrating all names equally, with correct pronunciation included.
Source	Based on inclusive language practices and identity-building activities

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Title of the tool	**Circle of Voices – Inclusive Talking Routine**
Type of bias addressed (e.g. gender, ethnicity, cultural, language/accent, socio-economic background, disability)	Disability, gender, socio-economic background, shyness-related exclusion
Target group (e.g. teacher, teacher + students, whole class)	Whole class
Description of how the tool works	A simple routine that ensures every child gets a turn to speak without interruption. Especially helpful for supporting quieter students and modeling respectful listening.
Steps for implementation	In a circle, pose a question or topic (e.g., "What made you happy today?"). Each child gets a turn to speak (or pass) without interruption. The teacher acts as facilitator but does not lead the conversation. Emphasize that everyone's voice matters equally. Use weekly to build inclusive communication habits.
Source	Adapted from inclusive classroom conversation protocols (e.g., National School Reform Faculty)

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Chapter 5: Mentorship and Peer Support

Bias reduction is not a one-time activity but an ongoing process. While individual reflection is important, real and lasting change happens when teachers work together to support one another. Mentorship and peer collaboration create opportunities for shared learning, constructive feedback, and collective responsibility for inclusion. This chapter provides guidance on how to build supportive structures within your school and use them to create bias-free classrooms.

Why Mentorship Matters

Teachers are often the most powerful change agents in schools. When one teacher takes the lead in exploring bias and modelling inclusive practices, others notice. Mentorship builds on this by creating a ripple effect: trained teachers can mentor colleagues, help them reflect on their own classroom habits, and share practical strategies. Over time, this leads to a whole-school culture where fairness and inclusion are part of daily practice, rather than isolated initiatives.

Peer Observation and Feedback

A key part of peer support is observing one another's lessons. When done respectfully, observation is not about judgement but about learning together. The **Bias-Aware Classroom Observation Checklist** can be used to guide what observers focus on:

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- Which students are called on most frequently?
- How is praise or correction distributed?
- Are teaching materials and examples inclusive of different genders, backgrounds, and abilities?

After the observation, a short feedback conversation helps the teacher reflect and decide on one or two practical changes to try. The aim is not to point out mistakes but to create a supportive dialogue that builds awareness and encourages experimentation.

Setting Up Bias Reflection Groups

One of the simplest and most effective ways to keep inclusion at the centre of school life is to set up small teacher reflection groups. These can be informal gatherings that meet once or twice a month to discuss classroom experiences, share challenges, and celebrate successes. A reflection group might:

- Begin with a short exercise (such as the Bias Jar or a scenario from this handbook).
- Allow teachers to share experiences where they noticed bias affecting decisions.
- Brainstorm solutions together and suggest tools from the handbook to try before the next meeting.

These groups can be voluntary and small (3–6 teachers), which helps keep the atmosphere safe and open. Over time, they become spaces for professional growth and mutual encouragement.

Supporting Colleagues

Mentorship is most effective when it is done with empathy. Some teachers may feel defensive or uncomfortable when discussing bias. It is important to listen first, acknowledge their feelings, and create a space where no one feels blamed. Offering to try a tool together, co-teach a lesson, or simply share your own reflections can be a gentle way to invite colleagues into the process.

Action Planning for Schools

To make mentorship sustainable, schools can integrate it into their professional development plans. This may include:

- Pairing teachers as "mentorship partners" for a term.
- Scheduling one peer observation per teacher per semester.
- Including reflection on inclusion in staff meetings or in-service training days.
- Encouraging teachers to repeat tools such as the Mirror Mapping audit once a year to monitor progress.

Mentorship and peer support turn bias awareness from a personal challenge into a collective mission. When teachers work together, they reinforce each other's growth, hold each other accountable, and ensure that the school as a whole, moves toward a culture of fairness, respect, and inclusion.

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