

# Want to debias your classroom?

## 1 KEEP TRACK OF WHOM YOU CALL ON

Student engagement is core to teaching and learning. How can you be an effective teacher by encouraging participation from all your students?

**Get the data:** With a roster in hand, document who gets chosen for opportunities, even grunt work! Whose participation do you encourage? Who gets consistently overlooked? Gathering data is the first step towards knowing if bias even exists.

## 2 RECONSIDER HOW YOU GRADE

### Grade question-by-question

If a student does well or poorly on one question in an assignment, it will likely affect your impression of the rest of their answers. So rather than grading students sequentially, grade question-by-question across all students.

### Use objective grading rubrics

When teachers were told that a writing sample was from a White (vs. Black) student, they were more likely to view the work at or above grade-level. This difference vanished when teachers in the study used clear, objective grading rubrics.

### Blind grade assignments

We can be influenced by irrelevant details, such as the name we see on an assignment. One study in Sweden found that native Swedish students received grades that were 8% higher compared to non-native students. This difference disappeared when names were removed, suggesting it was the teacher's expectations and not the students' performance creating this disparity.

**Move names:** There's an easy way to outsmart this bias. Simply ask students to write their name on the back of assignments instead of on Page 1. And don't peek!

### Adopt this attitude:

No single solution can take care of all bias at all levels. Consider testing for bias, changing behavior, and testing again until you are certain that you are closer to neutrality in your decisions. And remember: debiasing the classroom is in your and your students' best interests.

## 3 RECOGNIZE THE POWER OF EXPECTATIONS

### Consider implicit bias

Do you expect a nerdy-looking kid to be smarter? Our expectations help fill in details to create a compelling mental picture. But expectations also lead us to seek confirming evidence. Data show that when preschool teachers are asked to look out for "bad" behavior, they look longer and more often at Black than White children. Should we be surprised, then, that more bad behavior is "seen" in Black children?



**Know your implicit beliefs:** Identify your nonconscious expectations to yourself by taking an Implicit Association Test (IAT) at [outsmartingimplicitbias.org/module/iat](https://outsmartingimplicitbias.org/module/iat)

### Practice a "growth mindset"

Research shows that if you believe talent and ability are fixed at birth, your students are less likely to exceed your expectations. Your beliefs hinder their learning.

Assume that character, intelligence, and creative ability are malleable qualities. A study of over 12,000 ninth graders found that those exposed to growth mindsets earned higher grades and enrolled in advanced math classes more often than their peers.

## 4 STANDARDIZE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

One study found that the same child is viewed as a better student if we first see a photograph of her playing in a high-income vs. a lower-income neighborhood.

**Consider using a standardized background** for all students in virtual classrooms. But recognize that signals about social class can still creep in subtly. Make implicit biases explicit so your values (and not your bias!) have a greater chance to influence your behavior.

