I-5: Create a welcoming environment

Types of Bias to Search for in Curriculum Materials	
Invisibility	Certain groups may be underrepresented in curricular materials. Omission of women and minority groups has become so great as to imply that these groups are of less value, importance and significance in our society.
Stereotyping	By assigning traditional and rigid roles or attributes to a group, instructional materials may stereotype and limit the abilities and potential of that group. Children who see themselves portrayed only in stereotypical ways may internalize those stereotypes and fail to develop their own unique abilities, interests, and full potential.
Imbalance and Selectivity.	Textbooks can perpetuate bias by presenting only one interpretation of an issue, situation or group of people. This imbalanced account restricts the knowledge of students regarding the varied perspectives that may apply to a particular situation. Through selective presentation of materials, textbooks may distort reality and ignore complex and differing viewpoints. As a result, millions of students have been given limited perspectives concerning the contributions, struggles and participation of certain groups in society.
Unreality	Textbooks sometimes present an unrealistic portrayal of our history and our contemporary life experience. Controversial topics may be glossed over, and discussions of discrimination and prejudice may be avoided. This unrealistic coverage denies children the information they need to recognize, understand and perhaps someday conquer the problems that plague our society.
Fragmentation and Isolation	By separating issues related to minorities and women from the main body of the text, instructional materials imply that these issues are less important than and not a part of the cultural mainstream.
Linguistic Bias	Curricular materials can sometimes reflect the discriminatory nature of our language. Older texts about Native Americans might use terms like "savage" or "simple" to describe their lifestyle, for example. Common masculine terms, including the generic "he," also arguably deny the participation of women in our society. Imbalance of word order and lack of parallel terms that refer to women and men are also forms of linguistic bias, as are phrases like "women and children," which imply that grown, mature women are the equivalent of immature dependents.

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Bias In Curriculum—High School Example

Ms. Kirpalani used a school-issued history textbook for all her classes. While she liked much of the way history was presented and discussed in the book, she found a great deal of sexist subtext. She decided to create a lesson around analyzing the sexist content of the text, which had 24 chapters, and using that analysis to extrapolate the ways in which women's contributions have been excluded and marginalized in history. She divided her classes of 30 students into six cooperative learning groups of five students. Each of the six groups was given four chapters for which they were responsible, so between all six groups, all 24 chapters would be covered. Four of the five group members were each assigned a different chapter to read, while the fifth member of each group was assigned the task of compiling the data from the other four group members. Ms. Karpalani made it clear that students could volunteer to be the compiler, but that if no one did, or if arguments ensued, she would select someone. Each group was given the same instructions to follow for each chapter. The instructions were as follows:

1. Read the entire chapter. Track the number of references made to individual men and to individual women. List the accomplishments of each man mentioned, and of each woman mentioned.

2. Total the references to men and the references to women. Try to categorize all the reasons for which men were mentioned, and all the reasons for which women were mentioned. Categories might include: leadership, heroism, intellectual distinction, victims, innovators/inventors, bravery, risk-taking, selfless action, agent for change, industry, domestic life, military, health/healing, etc.

3. Throughout the chapter, note any generalizations about "people" or "groups" that seem to suggest that they apply to both men and women, but may actually refer only to the men of the time. Detail why this reference might not apply to women, and how their reality might have differed.

4. Throughout the chapter, note any time "women" or "men" are mentioned in general. Categorize the nature of the mention, using any of the categories mentioned above, or any other that apply.

5. Answer the following questions: What trends do you notice? Why do you think these trends evolved? What contributions that weren't included might women have made during the time period covered in this chapter?

6. Compilers must create their own system of tracking and recording the data from all four chapters. The entire group must approve the compiler's system, and must proofread and edit the final product. The final product must include answers to the following question: What contributions do women make to today's society that might be undervalued and underreported? What are some possible explanations for these under-representations of their experiences and contributions?

7. Students may volunteer, for extra credit, to help compile each group's master list into one complete master document that integrates data from all 24 chapters.