Equity Toolkit: Inclusive Teaching and Learning

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING AN INCLUSIVE COURSE

COLORADO
Department of
Higher Education

DECONSTRUCTING TASKS PROTOCOL

As teachers, we are given the positional authority to choose how our students engage in our classes. What students are asked to do, and how we ask them to do it, can be informed by the beliefs we hold about their knowledge, skills, needs, and levels of persistence. As such, the ways in which we ask students to engage in class can be an artifact of the implicit biases we hold about them. The goals of the Deconstructing Tasks Protocol are:

1. To become aware of how our underlying beliefs about students inform the ways we ask them to engage; in particular to determine what beliefs we hold about the capabilities of marginalized students.
2. To practice gaining a greater understanding of how students are experiencing what we ask of them.

STEP 1: IDENTIFYING WHAT WE ASK STUDENTS TO DO

Identify each of the tasks you ask students to complete from the first day of class through the first major assignment. For each task, (1) write a description of what you ask students to do, (2) describe the purpose of the assignment (what you hope to accomplish), and (3) describe what motivated you create the task and design it the way you did. Two examples are provided below

IDENTIFYING	DESCRIPTION/PURPOSE/MOTIVATING FACTORS
Syllabus Quiz	(1) I give my students an extra credit syllabus quiz in D2L that has 10 questions. (2) The purpose is to have the students become familiar with the policies of the class; the assignment deadlines, my contact information, and the resources I make available to them. (3) I find that students do not know how to use a syllabus. The syllabus quiz helps them learn how to be self-sufficient students.
Pre-Class Work	(1) I ask my students to watch a video before coming to class, and to take notes that will be turned in. (2) The purpose is to introduce the upcoming subject matter, and to create a richer class discussion. (3) I found that when I assigned the readings from the text, many students did not do it. I experimented with having students watch a video and take notes, and I found a much higher rate of completion. I could then use the videos as a starting point for the day's lecture.

http://masterplan.highered.colorado.gov/equitytoolkit

TASK	DESCRIPTION/PURPOSE/MOTIVATING FACTORS

STEP 2: SURVEYING YOUR STUDENTS

To practice gaining a greater understanding of how students are experiencing what we ask of them. Below is an initial set of questions to give your students. After determining which assignment you would like students to provide feedback on, determine if there are questions you would like to ask that are specific to that assignment.

NOTE: It is important to provide students with the context of the survey before you give it to your students. It is important that you do not ask leading questions and for you to be transparent about wanting to improve the way in which you provide the assignment that allows students to engage with it in a way that is authentic to who they are.

1. When this assignment was first explained to you (before you started working on it):
   a. What was your initial reaction? What was it about the assignment that caused you to feel that way?
   b. What was your overall level of confidence about being able to complete it successfully?
   c. Did it remind you of assignments you have been asked to do in the past?
   d. Did you have a clear idea of what it meant to do the assignment well?

2. When you began working on the assignment:
   a. Did you find your initial feelings about the assignment were accurate?
   b. Did you find the assignment to be easier or more difficult than you expected?
   c. What part of the assignment did you feel most and least capable of doing well? What was it about that part that you found most and least frustrating?
   d. Was there a point where you felt 'stuck'? If yes, where did you go for help? (my teacher, the tutoring lab, online videos, etc.)

3. When the assignment was finished:
   a. What knowledge did you learn? Do you feel you'll be able to use that knowledge in future classes, your career, or some other part of your life? If so, how?
   b. What skills did you learn? Do you feel you'll be able to use that skill in future classes, your career, or some other part of your life? If so, how?
   c. Did you learn something new about yourself?

STEP 3: REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What do the tasks you ask students to do suggest about your beliefs of their capabilities?
- Were there patterns you found about what motivates you to design assignments the way you do?
- In what ways are your assignments designed to 'fix' your students' deficits? What do your assignments say about what you feel their deficits are?
- In what ways are your assignments designed to build upon the strengths of your students? What do your assignments say about what you feel are their strengths?