

Curricular Detecting Skills

1. **Invisibility:** Certain groups have been underrepresented or ignored in education. When women and people of color are missing from displays and materials, the implication is that these groups are of less value and importance in our society. Do the classroom displays include women of achievement? Do curricular materials accurately mirror the nation's people?
2. **Stereotyping:** By assigning traditional and rigid roles or attributes to a group, the diversity, abilities, and potential of the group are limited. Too many people stereotype males as all sharing one set of characteristics and females sharing a completely different set. Adults may reward males for active, assertive, curious behavior, but reward females for appreciative, dependable, and considerate behavior. When models, pictures, and other displays reinforce these stereotyped expectations, children receive more messages of appropriate behavior, and many young people limit their careers and capabilities to fit these stereotyped roles.
3. **Imbalance/Selectivity:** The media and text materials have perpetuated bias by presenting only one interpretation of an issue, situation, or group of people. As a result, millions of learners have been given a limited point of view concerning the contributions, struggles, and participation of certain peoples in our society.
4. **Unreality:** Materials, media, and books have frequently presented an unrealistic portrayal of U.S. history and contemporary life by glossing over discussions of discrimination and abuse. But by ignoring past or current realities, even unpleasant ones, students are denied the information needed to recognize, understand, and perhaps someday conquer the problems that plague society.
5. **Fragmentation/Isolation:** By separating issues related to people of color and women from the main body of schooling, curricular materials have implied that these issues are less important than and not a part of the cultural mainstream. By arbitrarily separating males and females into a separate bulletin board or distinct sections of the text, the curriculum promotes fragmentation and isolation of the sexes and diverse ethnic groups. Purposeless fragmentation serves as a divisive influence and suggests that these groups are little more than a sideshow to the nation's history and progress.
6. **Linguistic bias:** Materials can reflect the discriminatory nature of the dominant language by using only masculine terms and pronouns, such as forefathers and the generic he. Occupations labeled with man, such as cameraman, deny the legitimacy of women working in these fields. What subtle and not-so-subtle linguistic bias can be found in the classroom?
7. **Cosmetic bias:** Textbook publishers are aware that educators and reform movements are demanding better, fairer, and more comprehensive materials in education. To rewrite textbooks requires thorough research and infusion. Occasionally, publishers and authors minimize the process by creating an illusion of equity. Two common shortcuts are pictures of nontraditional people prominently displayed or special sections or displays that discuss yet segregate women and other groups. Is there real equity in these materials or is it more an illusion?

From: Sadker, David M. and Zittleman, Karen. *Gender in the Classroom: Foundations, Skills, Methods, and Strategies Across the Curriculum, Chapter 8 Detecting and Correcting Gender Bias in Your Classroom*. Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., Mahwah, New Jersey, 2007