

Lesson Plan

Examining Bias in Media and Everyday Situations

Prepared by: Chris Bakken

Designed For Language Arts

Can Also Be Use For

Speech/Communications	World Languages	Social Studies	Advisory
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ETHICAL SKILL:

Controlling Bias

SUB-SKILL:

Examining Bias

GRAD STANDARD:

Reading, Listening, and Viewing Complex Information:
Identify Bias, Point of View, and Author's Intent

Level 1

Immersion in Examples and Opportunities (Attend to the big picture, Learn to recognize basic patterns)

Students look for bias in a school construction scenario:

Statement - *“Construction is going great this fall at South St. Paul Public Schools!”*

Now, depending on the bias of the individual /group, the facts that are paid attention to will be significantly different.

- ◆ Construction Workers: “It’s going great. We’ve gotten so much done in less than a year.... we’ve been working overtime to that these kids will have a terrific new building to learn in. Man, at ___ school where we were last year, it took us almost a year and a half. We are going fast, man!”
- ◆ Administration: We cannot believe the school is not ready. All I can do is shake my head....we were promised September, and it won’t be until October. What am I going to tell parents, staff, or the kids? How will I explain this to them all? I am so stressed out!”
- ◆ Teachers: “My room isn’t ready, I have no air conditioning, I can’t get to all my files, and there’s stuff all over. Not to mention that my room has been used as the lunchroom for those smelly workers all summer. PEEYOOO! This is going to be terrible year.”
- ◆ Parents: “Will it be safe for my Johnny and Susie? What if something falls on them? Will there be lunch provided? What if school starts later? How will I manage with the kids at home? I expect my tax paying

dollars to go toward the assurance that a safe, nice-looking school will be there for my kids when I send them off each day!”

- ◆ Students: “ What? No new lunchroom? They promised us that last year. And there was supposed to be a new, air-conditioned theater, more classrooms (meaning less people in my third hour), and all this technology. Well, where is it? I hear we get open lunch until the new lunchroom is built. Yee ha!”

Level 2

Attention to Facts and Skills (Focus on detail and prototypical examples, Build knowledge)

Students look for bias in music:

Partners will get the lyrics to one of these songs, and will attempt to spot the bias in the lyrics of the song. We will assume that the featured artist singing the song is presenting a bias through the performance. Specific instructions are:

Look for the bias of the artist by reading the lyrics and examining what ideas, beliefs, feelings, etc. are displayed by the artist. What might be the bias, point of view, or intent of the writer of this song?

Compare the bias of the artist with the “non-mentioned” other side in the song....for example, if the artist is singing about a lost love, what might be the bias of the other person who the artist is singing about. For example, why won't they get back together with the artist? Spend some time examining the lyrics of the artists, looking for the differing biases.

- ◆ Alicia Keys: “Fallin”
- ◆ Blu Cantrell: “ Hit 'Em Up Style”
- ◆ O-Town: “ All Or Nothing”
- ◆ Moby (Featuring Gwen Stefani): South Side
- ◆ Kenny Rogers: “The Greatest”

Level 3

Practice Procedures (Set goals, Plan steps of problem solving, Practice skills)

Students look for bias in television commercials:

The students will take on the role of retired TV commercial designers. They are being replaced by newer, younger people because they simply cannot grasp the concept of bias being necessary to sell products. The students will need to create a 30 second advertisement that they tried to pitch to their old bosses, complete with non-biased thinking. For example, they might try to sell shampoo with the slogan “It feels good to have clean hair, and Zippity Do does just that.” But the bosses wanted a commercial like the one where the woman yells and screams her pleasure while she's washing her hair. Extra Credit if the group can tape a commercial that is full of bias and bring it in!

Below might be some of the topics we would talk discuss to examine how advertisers automatically use bias to try and sell their products:

- ◆ An attractive model (guy or girl) will sell any product.
- ◆ Drinking is always involved with fun, exciting, party-type atmospheres.
- ◆ A new, expensive car takes care of all your needs.
- ◆ Everything has got to be as convenient as possible.

- ◆ You have to have the latest technology, or you're behind the times.
- ◆ Younger is always better.
- ◆ The coolest people, the biggest stars, and the most famous people use the same products you could use!
- ◆ You could move up the financial ladder by buying our product.
- ◆ If a scientist/company says the product is incredible, it must be.

Level 4

Integrate Knowledge and Procedures (Execute plans, Solve problems)

Students will make an present T-charts that will look like the following:

- ◆ What are my biases?
- ◆ What are the lenses I look through everyday?
- ◆ If I didn't have this bias, how might I look at things differently?

Example 1: I believe parents only want to make rules to keep me from having fun. Maybe they have my best interest in mind.

Example 2: I would never let myself become homeless. What if I volunteered at a homeless shelter?

* This is deep thinking, but maybe by examining bias in this way, my students could learn to see how their own biases have been and will continue to be shaped by their culture, family, friends, etc.