

Countering Gender Bias and Stereotypes in learning and workplace settings

Best Practices for Educators and Youth Workers



4
E
Q
U
A
L
I
T
Y



Check more at: 4equality.erasmus.site

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by
the European Union

Why countering bias and stereotypes is relevant in your work?

As an educator or youth worker, your role goes beyond teaching skills or delivering activities. You also shape the culture and environment in which young people learn and grow. Bias and stereotypes, even subtle ones, can significantly affect participation, confidence, and long-term opportunities, particularly in male-dominated fields like STEM and business.

Research shows that young women in these environments often experience:

- **Stereotype threat:** worry about confirming negative assumptions, which can reduce performance,
- **Microaggressions:** small comments or actions that undermine credibility or belonging.
- **Underrepresentation:** seeing few peers or role models like themselves, which can decrease persistence and ambition.

By recognizing, addressing, and actively preventing bias, you can create inclusive spaces where everyone feels respected and heard. You can empower young women to pursue opportunities confidently and encourage positive group dynamics that foster collaboration and fairness, which will contribute to more inclusive and diverse environments in STEM and business settings in a long-term. Moreover, your awareness and action directly influence whether young people see themselves as capable, valued, and welcome in STEM, business, or any field they choose to pursue.



Strategies to Counter Bias



1. Recognize Bias and Stereotypes

Educate yourself and students on common forms of bias - gender, race, socioeconomic, as while gender-bias is the one in key focus in STEM and business, biases can overlap and each of them impacts productivity, safety and participation.

Observe interactions in workshops, clubs, classrooms, group work or presentations. Pay attention to:

- Interruptions or talking over someone,
- Unequal assignment of leadership or technical roles,
- Dismissive comments or assumptions about abilities.

Introduce bias spotting exercises to build awareness, as the first step to preventing and addressing bias. Present scenarios (e.g., group project, lab session) and ask students to identify any bias or stereotype in play. Discuss how it could be addressed.

2. Create Group Norms for Inclusion

Reduce biased behaviors and make inclusion a shared responsibility. Co-create rules for respectful interaction: equal speaking time, listening, constructive feedback. Rotate roles in projects so everyone has a chance at leadership or technical responsibilities.



Encourage reflection on group dynamics after activities:

- Who contributed ideas?
- Who led tasks?
- Did anyone feel excluded?

3. Teach the Group to React to Bias

Create a shared responsibility for inclusion and a culture where bias is actively addressed. Empower the whole group, both male and female participants, to recognize biased behaviors, call them out respectfully, and ensure they are not tolerated.

a. **Prepare your students to recognise symptoms of bias.** Teach participants to notice behaviors that signal bias: interruptions, dismissing ideas, or using stereotypes. Provide realistic examples or role-play exercises to practice spotting bias

b. **Provide models for respectful interventions.** Teach to call bias respectfully, focusing on behaviors, not individuals, keeping language polite and constructive, e.g.:

- “Let’s give everyone a chance to speak.”
- “I think her idea deserves to be heard fully.”
- “That assumption doesn’t apply here; let’s focus on the evidence.”

c. **Practice and reflect together.** Role-play common scenarios and practice collective responses. After activities make space to debrief:

- “Did anyone notice biased behavior?”
- “How did we respond as a group?”
- “What can we do to ensure this doesn’t happen again?”

d. **Encourage Peer Accountability.** Create simple, shared expectations for how the group treats one another, e.g.:

- “everyone gets to finish their sentence,”
- “ideas are judged on content, not who shares them”.

Teach students that accountability is a shared responsibility, not just the job of the educators or managers. Practice this by giving students short scenarios where they must decide how to support a peer facing bias - “What could you say if someone idea is being dismissed based on a bias?”.

Reinforce positive examples when students naturally step in to keep interactions fair. Over time, this helps normalise behaviours such as checking assumptions, calling out dismissive comments, and inviting quieter voices in. Emphasise that peer accountability makes bias less frequent because the group culture actively discourages it. This creates a safer, more equitable, and more welcoming environment where both the group and each individual benefit.



4. Model Inclusive Behavior

Demonstrate fairness in attention, praise, and task assignment. Highlight diverse role models in STEM, business and other areas. Provide feedback that focuses on effort, strategy, and skill, not assumptions about gender. Remember that students mirror behavior of authority figures, so keep your own conscious and unconscious biases in check.



5. Teach Students to Respond Individually

Practice assertive communication and advocacy for personal experiences of bias. Prepared responses increase confidence and reduce the impact of bias on participation. Role-play realistic scenarios for different behaviours:

- Interruptions: "I'd like to finish my point."
- Dismissed ideas: "Here's the evidence supporting my suggestion."
- Stereotype comments: "That assumption doesn't fit; let me explain."



Combating gender-bias in your environment

By recognizing, preparing for, and responding to bias and stereotypes, both individually and as a group, educators and youth workers can create safe, inclusive spaces where all participants, particularly young women feel confident, respected, and empowered to pursue STEM, business, or leadership opportunities. To achieve it, remember:

- Use simple, non-judgmental language when discussing bias.
- Be proactive rather than reactive, anticipate situations where bias might arise.
- Encourage peer accountability where students notice and correct bias in real time.