ROSTER JUSTICE PRACTICE SPACE

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Becoming a More Equitable Educator:
Mindsets and Practices

MIT | TEACHING SYSTEMS LAB

Welcome to the Roster Justice Guide

This is a guide to help you facilitate the Roster Justice practice space, a digital scenario developed by the Teaching Systems Lab to help teachers rehearse typical and challenging situations in education.

In this scenario, participants will experience a simulation focused on thinking about equity issues in more logistics-based aspects of schooling and practicing advocating for equity to school leaders.

The goal of this activity is to guide educators in a conversation about the Aware and Avoidant Educator Mindsets. Participants will talk about the multiple ways that school practices and policies might impact students, and the concept of a teachers' role in advocating for students.

We believe that mindsets like Aware and Avoidant are often out of balance in schools, and hope that conversations and activities like these will help us begin to rebalance. To learn more about the Educator Mindsets, access our online course, Becoming a More Equitable Educator: Practices and Mindsets or watch this video by instructor Richard Milner.

The practice space should take between 60-90 minutes.

IN THIS GUIDE YOU'LL FIND THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS

Getting Ready to Facilitate a Practice Space

PREPARE YOURSELF

- Watch this video from instructor Justin Reich about facilitating practice spaces.
- Spend some time looking over the following documents. You'll need to be familiar with them to facilitate effectively.
    - The Roster Justice scenario itself
        i. For help navigating TeacherMoments, watch this tutorial.
        ii. Make sure to fill out the survey at the end (it's different from the one in the course); it helps us understand how people are using and sharing our materials.
- The Aware versus Avoidant Educator Mindset Table
- The Debrief Guide and Mindsets in the Practice Space handout.
- For more resources on facilitation, see the Appendices.

SCHEDULE A TIME TO MEET

- We recommend planning 60-90 minutes to do the practice space with a group. A longer time will give you more time to debrief. If you have less than 60 minutes, consider asking participants to complete the practice space individually before meeting.

- If you are new to facilitating equity conversations, you may want to consider inviting a smaller group of colleagues to try it out with you before sharing with a larger audience.

GATHER NEEDED MATERIALS

Each participant will need:

- a device with internet access to do the practice spaces. We find laptops and Chromebooks work best for TeacherMoments while the platform doesn't work as well on mobile devices.
- Headphones. For this practice space, participants will need to listen to videos and record themselves speaking. (Note: to record themselves speaking, participants will need to use the microphone in their device or headphones, if they have one.)
- a copy of the Asset versus Deficit Mindset Table (Handout 1)
- a copy of the Mindsets in Practice Handout (Handout 2)

Facilitating the Practice Space

BEFORE STARTING THE PRACTICE SPACE (5-10 MINUTES)

Facilitator Actions	Suggestions
Set up	Set out a copy of Handouts 1 and 2 for each participant, face down.
Once participants arrive, orient them and frame the simulation	Talk about what you're about to do and how it fits in with shared goals and challenges in your context.
Set norms and expectations	Share that practice spaces are great places to try out responses, try new things and make mistakes in a structured environment. Encourage participants to be open-minded and ready to listen and learn from peers.
Let them know about the practice space survey	Let them know there will be a survey at the end of the practice space, and encourage them to complete it - either during the workshop or afterwards if they run out of time. This survey is very helpful to us, because it helps us understand how people are using our materials.
Connect everyone to the practice space	Share link to Roster Justice, and then troubleshoot as needed • On the login page, tell everyone to "continue anonymously" instead of logging in • See Appendix C to troubleshoot

DURING THE PRACTICE SPACE DIGITAL SCENARIO (30 MINUTES)

Note that you would skip this part if you chose to have participants do the individual, digital part of the practice space ahead of time.

Facilitator Actions	Suggestions
Manage time	• Check in about time every ten minutes or so. • 5 minutes before time is up, ask everyone to click forward to the last video of Mr. Holl (it has "S6" in the upper left corner), and encourage them to try to finish the reflection questions. • Let them know it's OK if they don't complete the survey if they run out of time
Troubleshoot as needed	• Walk around to see if participants have questions • See Appendix C to troubleshoot.

DEBRIEF GUIDE (20-40 MINUTES)

Facilitator Actions	Suggestions
1. Ask participants: What were your initial reactions to talking to Mr. Holl? Did you feel like your conversation was productive?	Focus on why participants felt the conversation productive or not, in addition to the initial reactions
2. Ask participants: What did you notice about the class rosters? Who was in CS and who wasn't? What factors should be considered when creating a school scheduling system?	The math class rosters have significant disparities in class size, and in the distribution of students across race, gender, and disability. Students in the CS class were mostly White boys and students without Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
3. Ask participants to turn over Handout 1: Aware versus Avoidant Educator Mindset Table and briefly review it.	Draw their attention to two pairs of squares: • 2B / 5B • 3B / 6B
4. Pause a moment to read Handout 2: Mindsets in the Practice Space.	Ask people for their thoughts after reading, and to locate their own responses along a spectrum of Aware versus Avoidant.
5. Ask participants: What did you recommend to Mr. Holl at the end of the meeting for an "actual, viable" solution?	After reading about the Aware and Avoidant mindsets, is there anything they would change or do differently?
6. Remind participants Mr. Holl's responses in the conversation were: • There's no time to make big changes/ big changes are hard • You can get a teaching assistant for the bigger class • Students self-selected to sign up for CS • Having a subset of kids in CS is better than having no CS class Ask, do you agree or disagree with any of Mr. Holl's suggestions or do any reasons stand out to you? Why or why not?	You can point to square 2C on the mindset chart: "Instructional and curricular decisions reflect awareness of structural inequities and power imbalances."

DEBRIEF GUIDE CONTINUED

Facilitator Actions	Suggestions
7. Connect to your own practice (if you haven't already).	If folks need a prompt: What connections can you make between this practice space and dilemmas you've faced as an educator?
8. Call to action: are there places you could experiment with bringing more Aware-based reasoning into your practice?	Examples of adding Aware perspectives might include: • Notice where you have the power to advocate for underrepresented students when making structural decisions; see how these efforts can positively influence academic achievement. • Try being aware of how these patterns show up in your context, and create solutions that center race, gender and other demographic factors.

NEXT STEPS (5-10 MINUTES)

Facilitator Actions
How do you see Aware or Avoidant mindsets in action in your context?
What next steps might this group take together to continue to address these issues in your context?
Thank everyone for their time and encourage participants to fill out the survey at the end of the practice space if they haven't already.

DEBRIEF TIPS

1. As you talk about the differences between the rosters, encourage participants to concretely name what they are seeing in terms of gender, race, and disability status. If this feels uncomfortable, remind participants that being able to recognize and discuss inequities based on student demographics is a necessary step in addressing those inequities.

DEBRIEF TIPS CONTINUED

2. If people are getting derailed by the specifics of the scenario, here are some ways to respond:

   a. "Something in this scenario isn't realistic to my circumstances!" this is just a scenario, and the details won't all match with every participants' circumstances. For now, how can we use the scenario to talk about our own reasoning about students?

   b. "I don't know enough about the context of the school!" There are often scenarios where we have limited or incomplete information about something in our context. You could ask people what they would want to know, or what they don't see.

   c. "A lot of the things to help to fix the rosters needed needed to happen weeks ago!" This is often also true in real life - we realize that the best intervention for a student is something that we wish we'd done weeks ago - so the question is: what can we do now going forward?

3. As you talk about the Aware and Avoidant mindsets, you could point out that in schools these mindsets are often out of balance, with lots of Avoidant reasoning. We want to think about how to bring more Aware reasoning.

4. If participants are expressing an Avoidant mindset, ask them to look at the first row of the mindset chart, and see if they could reframe their position using this orientation.

Appendices

APPENDIX A. Want to dig deeper as a facilitator?

    a. Watch a video of educators debriefing after doing the Roster Justice Practice Space together.

    b. Learn more about Aware and Avoidant Mindsets in this video from Richard Milner IV, professor of education at Vanderbilt University.

APPENDIX B. What are practice spaces?

    a. A practice space is an online scenario that allows you to explore an improvisational moment with students in a way that helps you stretch and grow. It allows you to try things and then reflect on how well they might work or how you reasoned about your decisions.

    b. Watch this short video to learn more about how we describe practice spaces in the Teaching Systems Lab.

APPENDIX C. Troubleshooting TeacherMoments

Watch this video for a tutorial on using TeacherMoments.

If you have any trouble with TeacherMoments, try the following:

- Make sure you have an updated browser, preferably Chrome (instructions to download and install Chrome AND Instructions to update Chrome)
- Refresh your browser and try again
- Hard refresh your browser and try again (instructions on how to do hard refresh)
- If possible, we recommend using TeacherMoments on a laptop or desktop. We've had better luck there than on smartphones

If you forget your password:

- There is no password reset; just create a new account

If Teacher Moments is not loading, we have an alternative version which you can use if you cannot get TeacherMoments to work on your device.

If you run into any issues using TeacherMoments, we'd love to hear about it at equitymit503@gmail.com.

APPENDIX D. Handouts

Handout 1 - Educator Mindsets Table: Aware versus Avoidant

Scroll to the next page for a printable handout; click here for a digital version.

A Framework of Educator Mindsets and Consequences
AWARE VERSUS AVOIDANT

Mindset	Orientation	Explanation	Consequences
AWARE	**1A)** I try to understand how the identity and background of students and teachers influences teaching and learning.	**1B)** Educators are aware that student identity and background influences how they access and perform in school.	**1C)** Educators strive to understand and discuss demographic background and identity (race, ethnicity, gender, etc.) in class, in curriculum, with colleagues.
	2A) When I teach, I seek to recognize that students experience school differently due to structural inequities.	**2B)** Educators understand that structural inequities related to demographic identities impacts daily experiences of students in the classroom.	**2C)** Instructional and curricular decisions reflect awareness of structural inequities and power imbalances.
	3A) We need to talk about issues around demographic identity in making decisions about school policy.	**3B)** Educators see the identity and background of students as important factors and consider them in decisions and school policy.	**3C)** Student identity and demographics are central in supporting student academic achievement at the school policy level.
AVOIDANT	**4A)** Acknowledging the ethnic background of students might offend someone.	**4B)** Educators do not see students' backgrounds and identities as important factors in teaching and learning.	**4C)** Educators operate without considering how demographic backgrounds and identities (race, ethnicity, gender, etc.) impact how students experience school.
	5A) Student identity and background does not play a role in curriculum or teaching.	**5B)** Educators do not recognize how structural inequities related to demographic identity impacts the daily lives of students in the classroom.	**5C)** Instructional and curricular decisions do not address structural inequities related to demographic identities.
	6A) We need to focus on sound policy decisions and not worry about demographic identity.	**6B)** Educators see student background and identity as unrelated to decision making and school policy.	**6C)** Student demographic identity is peripheral or ignored in supporting student academic achievement at the school policy level.

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HANDOUT 2: MINDSETS IN THE PRACTICE SPACE
ROSTER JUSTICE

"If a system is not equipped to talk about identity and structural inequalities, it is at risk of reproducing them."

- Rich Milner, Professor of Education, Vanderbilt University

AVOIDANT-BASED REASONING

An Avoidant-based mindset favors the idea that a school can still treat everyone fairly even if student demographics (race, gender, disability) are overlooked, rather than recognizing that students experience school differently given their backgrounds. This perspective fails to see the significance of addressing the racial and gender segregation in the CS and math class rosters. Accepting a solution that focuses on convenience (simply adding a teaching assistant), or the number of students in the class without addressing underlying differences in racial/ ethnic and gender representation in the class implies that students' background is unrelated to academic opportunity. While most teachers care about their students' academic success, this mindset perpetuates racial and gender identities as taboo topics.

> **Avoidant mindset: "A teaching assistant would be incredibly helpful, Mr. Holl. I think this is a great idea and would solve the roster issues I've brought up today."**

AWARE-BASED REASONING

An Aware-based mindset acknowledges the differences and roles that student demographics play in the classroom and school at large. In this case, relying on students to choose their elective class, and assuming they are knowledgeable about their options, doesn't properly assess their interest, nor does it reflect their potential. Some common rationales for pushing the roster to be more representative of student potential is that students are influenced by what they have already been exposed to, or have not been exposed to, in computer science (CS). Understanding and articulating that statistically, White and Asian males have more exposure and access to a subject like CS, and are significantly more represented in the CS workforce, is one way to employ an Aware mindset in Roster Justice.

> **Aware mindset: "Educating our students about what CS entails might create a more natural balance in the demographic makeup of each class, with the added bonus of equalizing the class sizes. I'd be happy to share more info about each of these electives with our students."**

An Asset-Aware-based mindset also understands that curricular and policy decisions must reflect structural inequities. This requires honest conversations with school leaders. This also suggests that navigating power imbalances is fundamental to a successful conversation about race, gender, and ability, despite Mr. Holl's discomfort or unwillingness to acknowledge the severity of segregated classes. Ultimately an Aware rationale advocates for students who wouldn't have otherwise been introduced to CS: Black and Latinx students, girls of all races/ethnicities, and IEP students. An Aware mindset prioritizes the opportunity of exposing these students to CS, and teaching them how CS can relate to their world and their future. Opening the minds of all students can't happen without finding ways to discuss race, gender, and other identities in decision and policy making.

> **Aware mindset: "I understand that it's complicated because we have a lot of students. But this situation isn't out of our control. We create the schedule. We have and should have control over that, especially if it is closing opportunities for very specific groups of students. Having a teaching assistant would mitigate the issue, but it won't solve the root problem."**

FINAL THOUGHTS

There is often a stark imbalance between the Aware and Avoidant mindsets in schools. We invite you to try out more aware-based reasoning:

- Notice where you have the power to advocate for underrepresented students when making structural decisions; see how these efforts can positively influence academic achievement.
- Try being aware of how these patterns show up in your context, and create solutions that center race, gender or other demographic identities.

It is easy to overlook things such as segregated school because students "made their own decisions", or "that's just how things are." Too often, decisions made by school leaders that reflect racial disparities are either left unnoticed, not prioritized, or ignored. There is a common emphasis on being politically correct, not questioning authority, and avoiding tension in the workplace by ignoring race and gender inequalities.

However, an Aware mindset not only acknowledges these patterns, but presents viable solutions that address these inequities. If looking back on your responses, you think your conversation and observations demonstrated more of an Avoidant-focused reasoning, we invite you to try on more Aware-based reasoning.

APPENDIX E. Sample invitation email text

Dear _____,

I have been taking an online course with MIT's Teaching Systems Lab about equity teaching practices as a pathway for transforming the school experience. I would like to share some of what I learned with folks at [insert name of school or organization]. I'm hoping that it will help us talk about ways to support all of our students, and close gaps of opportunity or access they face.

To do this, I'm inviting colleagues to get together and complete an activity from the course called a practice space. A practice space is a digital scenario representing a typical interaction at a school. Each participant will respond individually, and then we'll talk about what actions we chose, what we'd like to practice more, and how this can help us understand best practices in supporting students.

I would like to invite you to join us on [Insert Date]. Can you join us?

You do not have to register for the course or review content in order to join the activity. However, if you would like to learn more about the course, visit the Becoming a More Equitable Educator edX page or YouTube channel. If you're interested, consider enrolling in the course to get access to videos, readings, and other activities.