

DESIGN ELEMENTS FOR ANTIRACIST PERFORMANCE TASKS



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Education Commonwealth Project

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About the Education Commonwealth Project

The Education Commonwealth Project (ECP) works to support assessment of student learning and school progress that is valid, democratic, and equitable. Pushing back against the overreliance on standardized testing, ECP offers free and open-source resources that all schools can use. And thanks to support from the Massachusetts State Legislature, ECP offers additional support for public schools and districts in Massachusetts.

Antiracist performance tasks provide students with opportunities to engage in meaningful assessment experiences that challenge and dismantle systemic bias. In our effort to create a model of a more just assessment and accountability system, the Education Commonwealth Project (ECP) and the Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment (MCIEA) work with educators to develop antiracist tasks that seek to address systemic injustices while maintaining rigorous alignment with academic standards.

In this brief, we outline four elements to consider when designing antiracist performance tasks. These elements aim to leverage students’ lived experiences, create connections among their identities and the academic disciplines, counteract racialized or deficit-oriented narratives, examine systemic inequities and empower students as agents of change. For each element, we offer an example of a task that illustrates how the element could be operationalized. By incorporating one or more of these four elements into performance tasks, educators can create powerful assessment experiences that assess students’ academic content knowledge while advancing antiracism.

Element 1: Draw on students’ lived experiences and cultural assets.

Incorporating students' lived experiences and cultural assets into performance tasks validates their homes and communities as valuable places of knowledge and seeks to create connections between their experiences in the world and the academic content. This approach enhances learning by building on the diverse knowledge that students bring to the classroom and confronts racism by empowering students to leverage their cultural knowledge as intellectual capital.

Example 1. High School English Language Arts

Assessed Standard	<u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4</u> - Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.
Task Description	Students interview family or community members whose first language is not English to gather stories, proverbs, or idiomatic expressions from their native languages. Students then prepare and deliver well-organized presentations to the class, explaining the cultural significance of the gathered linguistic elements and demonstrating their understanding of the importance of sustaining cultural pluralism within our society. Students who are multilingual themselves can explore how their linguistic capital is an asset

that supports them in their academic learning and beyond. Students then organize and conduct a public exhibition, showcasing their findings for families and community members.

Element 2: Position students as knowers, doers, and knowledge builders within the disciplines.

Academic learning and student identity are intertwined. Positioning students as doers and knowers within the disciplines can have positive impacts on both student learning and identity development. Performance tasks that give students of color opportunities to create connections between their identities and the academic disciplines challenge traditional power structures that communicate deficit-oriented narratives to students about who is recognized or valued for their knowledge and contributions. Additionally, building these personal connections with the content has the potential to increase student motivation and success.

Example 2. High School Social Studies - Government

<p>Assessed Standard</p>	<p><u>MA.HSS.GOV.T3.02</u> - Research, analyze, and present orally, in writing or through a multimedia presentation the historical context of two Supreme Court decisions on a topic related to individual rights and what the respective decisions demonstrate about how the protection of individual rights has evolved over time. Cite textual evidence to summarize key perspectives in the decisions and provide historical context for the particular decisions cited.</p>
<p>Task Description</p>	<p>First, students take on the roles of social scientists and civil rights advocates to gather local knowledge, stories, and experiences that shed light on environmental inequities within their region. Next, students research and analyze two Supreme Court decisions related to environmental justice, citing textual evidence to summarize key perspectives in the decisions. Examples of relevant cases may include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massachusetts v. Environmental Protection Agency (2007) • Sierra Club v. Morton (1972) • Lujan v. Defenders of Wildlife (1992) • Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co. (1926)

	Students then gather relevant public data from today, such as air or water quality reports or geospatial maps of environmental hazards, to support their analysis of the lasting impacts of the selected Supreme Court cases on individual rights. With their research findings and understanding of the historical context, students will collaborate with community members to develop and refine an outreach and advocacy plan that further promotes civil rights and environmental justice.
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Element 3: Counteract racialized or deficit-oriented narratives.

Antiracist performance tasks create opportunities to counteract negative stereotypes and challenge false assumptions about individuals from marginalized groups. By working to debunk harmful associations and misconceptions, these tasks encourage students to question their own biases, broaden their perspectives, and develop a more accurate understanding of individuals and communities who experience discrimination on the basis of their identities.

Example 3. Middle School Math

Assessed Standard	<u>CCSS.MATH.7.SP.A.1</u> - Understand that statistics can be used to gain information about a population by examining a sample of the population; generalizations about a population from a sample are valid only if the sample is representative of that population.
Task Description	Students collect data on the representation of girls in STEM-related activities in their school (e.g., participation rates in STEM clubs, achievement in math and science competitions, and enrollment in advanced math and science courses). Students then analyze the data to identify patterns and compare those to trends in national employment data in the sciences and engineering. Using their knowledge of sampling and populations, students construct explanations for why the patterns they see may differ between the population of students in their schools and the nationally representative data of working adults. Students will engage in dialogue to relate their findings and explanations to selected research on gender bias that shows how girls and women are subtly and explicitly discouraged from entering STEM fields of study and professions as they advance through school.

Element 4: Examine systemic inequities and empower students as agents of change.

Antiracist performance tasks can provide meaningful opportunities for students to examine systemic inequities and take action to address those social injustices. By fostering a deep understanding of historical and contemporary issues, antiracist tasks help students develop consciousness about the systemic injustices in the world around them. Additionally, antiracist tasks foster a sense of agency and responsibility for creating a more just and equitable society by providing opportunities for students to engage in authentic problem solving and advocacy.

Example 4. Elementary Science

Assessed Standard	NGSS.4.ESS3.2 - Generate and compare multiple solutions to reduce the impacts of natural Earth processes on humans.
Task Description	Students explore the impact of urban heat islands on communities of color by analyzing temperature variations, vegetation coverage, and infrastructure differences. Working collaboratively, students design, evaluate and refine proposals for green infrastructure solutions, such as community gardens or green roofs, and present their solutions to local or state representatives to mitigate these disparities and promote environmental justice.



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