MLA// EXTENDED ASSESSMENT TASK

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NAME OF SESSION	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I)
STUDENT NAME	

ASSESSMENT FOCUS	Understanding DE&I issues within the tech industry and how to incorporate DE&I into product design

Scenario:

You are a new team lead at a tech company known for its innovative software products. You are responsible for fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive (DE&I) work environment within your team. Your team is currently working on a new project to develop a virtual reality (VR) educational platform for children.

Task:

1. **DE&I Importance:** Explain why DE&I is crucial in the tech industry, particularly in the context of developing a VR educational platform for children. Discuss how diverse perspectives and experiences can contribute to creating a more inclusive and effective product.

2. **Inclusive Language:** Analyze how the use of inclusive language can impact your team's dynamics and the development of the VR educational platform. Provide specific examples of inclusive language that can be used in team communication, product documentation, and user interfaces.

3. **Unconscious Bias:** Discuss the concept of unconscious bias and how it can affect decision-making within your team and the design of the VR educational platform. Explain strategies you would implement to mitigate the impact of unconscious bias and promote fairness and equity.

1. DE&I Importance

DE&I is crucial in developing a VR educational platform for children because diverse teams create products that serve diverse users. Children come from varied cultural backgrounds, abilities, learning

styles, and family structures - a homogeneous team risks building a platform that inadvertently excludes or alienates significant user groups.

Diverse perspectives drive better design decisions: A team member with dyslexia might advocate for customizable text sizes and dyslexia-friendly fonts. Someone from a non-Western culture could identify content that unintentionally reflects only Western perspectives, ensuring the platform represents global cultures authentically. Parents on the team understand real-world constraints families face, like limited internet access or shared devices, influencing practical design choices.

Equity ensures accessibility: Team members with disabilities or those who have family members with disabilities champion accessibility features from the start - screen reader compatibility, colour-blind friendly palettes, motor skill accommodations - rather than treating these as afterthoughts. This benefits all children, not just those with identified disabilities.

Inclusion creates trust: When the development team reflects the diversity of their young users, they're more likely to catch cultural insensitivities, stereotypes, or exclusionary content before launch. A diverse team designing VR avatars would naturally include various skin tones, body types, hair textures, and mobility aids, allowing every child to see themselves represented. This representation matters profoundly for children's self-esteem and sense of belonging. Ultimately, DE&I isn't just ethical - it's essential for building effective, widely adopted educational technology.

2. Inclusive Language

Inclusive language shapes team culture and product quality. In team communication, replacing "guys" with "everyone" or "team" ensures all genders feel included. Instead of "man-hours," use "workhours" or "person-hours." When discussing users, avoid assumptions - say "the parent or guardian" rather than "the mom," recognizing diverse family structures.

In product documentation: Replace gendered pronouns with "they/them" or rewrite sentences to avoid pronouns entirely. Instead of "when the teacher opens his classroom," write "when teachers open their classrooms." Use "users" or "learners" rather than "boys and girls," as this excludes non-binary children. Documentation should state "children who are blind" rather than "blind children," using person-first language that emphasizes the individual before the disability.

In user interfaces: Offer diverse avatar customization options beyond binary gender choices. Instead of "male/female" selections, use "select your avatar" with various options. Educational content should feature characters with different abilities, family structures, and cultural backgrounds. Avoid idioms that don't translate across cultures - "hit it out of the park" means nothing to children unfamiliar with baseball.

Practical example for VR platform: The login screen asks, "What should we call you?" instead of "What's your name, young man/lady?" Progress notifications say, "Great job!" rather than "Good boy/girl!" These small changes create an environment where every child feels the platform was designed with them in mind, improving engagement and learning outcomes.

3. Unconscious Bias

Unconscious bias consists of automatic, unintentional prejudices affecting decisions without awareness. In VR educational platform development, bias might manifest when designers unconsciously create scenarios featuring only certain demographics as protagonists, or when testers primarily evaluate content based on their own cultural reference points, missing issues affecting other groups.

Specific impacts: A team might unconsciously design all authority figures (teachers, doctors, scientists) as one gender or race, sending harmful messages about who belongs in these roles. Voice recognition features might be trained primarily on one accent, performing poorly for children with different speech patterns. Educational scenarios might assume all children have stable home internet, two-parent households, or celebrate the same holidays.

Mitigation strategies:

Diverse hiring and team composition creates natural checkpoints where different perspectives surface potential biases. **Structured decision-making frameworks** require teams to explicitly consider impact across demographic groups before finalizing features - asking "How does this work for children with visual impairments?" or "Does this scenario reflect only Western culture?"

Bias awareness training helps team members recognize their own unconscious assumptions. **Anonymous feedback channels** allow concerns about bias to be raised safely. **User testing with diverse children** catches issues before launch - recruit testers representing various abilities, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, and family structures. Regularly reviewing analytics for usage patterns across demographics reveals if certain groups disengage, signaling potential bias in design. These strategies transform good intentions into tangible equity.