

An Anti-Racist CS Curriculum Audit

How might your own computer science lessons and classroom be more actively anti-racist? Consider using this list of questions as a tool to self-audit. Constructed originally by Nick Zufelt from the work done at [the ethi{CS} summer project](#), a 4-session series on anti-racism in computer science classrooms.

Avoiding Norms

These questions were generated in an attempt to avoid perpetuating White American/Western Dominant Culture Norms (to learn more, see, for example, [this resource from Showing Up for Racial Justice](#)).

- **Perfectionism:** How are mistakes valued for learning? Does that manifest in assessments?
- **Sense of Urgency:** Do I give ample time for students who move at different paces?
- **Worship of the Written Word:** Are there moments where students can create in ways other than writing? Are they able to take in information in ways other than reading?
- **Paternalism:** Does student choice convey the respect I have for their ability to govern their own learning?
- **Fear of Open Conflict:** Are students able to challenge my assertions? Do they know how to do so without (fear of) being shut down?
- **Individualism:** How is student success recognized? Is collective success recognized?
- **Objectivity:** Do I offer and welcome other interpretations or ways of solving problems?

Lesson Elements

- How do my examples or analogies fit into a racially unjust world? Can everyone relate to them? Who might not be able to? (e.g. I could change a `Car` class/object into a `User` class/object)?
- If I include examples or cases of harm done to people, do I appropriately warn students who might feel triggered by the case? Do I provide other pathways toward learning if so?
- Think about the blending of the technical and the non-technical. Is the lesson structured such that students must do the non-technical (e.g. ethical) and technical aspects of learning?
- What shape do discussions of ethics take in the lesson? What framing questions will I provide? Do they relate to both behaviors of individuals and to systems of power? How do those framing questions connect to the course's learning objectives, and how do they avoid tokenizing the discussion as "the ethics discussion" and call students into the conversation as co-owners?
- Where might I be hitting the invisible walls of the discipline of computer science, and how might allowing the lesson to be bound by them make some students feel like outsiders? (e.g. is there room to discuss the political structures at play?)
- How am I balancing formative and summative assessment? Can students test their own understanding discreetly and regularly?

Assumptions and achievement gaps

- How might a student's confusion about previous material cause them to be stuck in this lesson? How does the lesson combat achievement gaps, rather than reinforce them?
- Is reproducing my actions a major component of the lesson, and how do I make that an achievable goal for all students? (e.g., do I make explicit how sharing one's confusion is a form of privilege?)
- What are students actually making in our classroom? How might students connect what they are actually making to their own lives or communities?
- How is the students' social/cultural background/identity valued and represented? Are there opportunities for students to create something that expresses their creativity, interests, and identities?

- Where am I leveraging what I might be tempted to call “common sense”? Why must I leverage it? How common is this sense? Is it more cultural than common?
- Is there room for revision and for revisiting and valuing a student’s previous work?

Anti-racism and Ethics Skills

Are there opportunities for both my students and me to practice being actively anti-racist?

- How should students develop a proximity to a presented social issue? For example, how are they impacted by it, and how do their actions help to perpetuate it?
- How does the lesson allow for students and for me to practice perspective-taking? What conversations will we have about who is impacted by what we are creating?
- How does the lesson allow for students and for me to practice embracing a lack of closure?
- How is power discussed in the lesson? Where does power exist without discussion in the lesson?
- How can I know that all the relevant stakeholders are present in the lesson? Do students get to practice identifying stakeholders and their values in an example, or even in the lesson itself?
- Is there built-in time for building caring relationships?

Implementation

- Do I normalize calling out White American/Western Dominant Culture Norms in our classroom and in the content, and equip students with the language to do so?
- Do I offer ample opportunities to recognize white, cis-gender, male, and/or heterosexual privilege in the classroom and in the content?
- How does my pedagogy allow me to demonstrate being “unafraid to make waves”? Can I demonstrate critically examining structures and systems of power within my own school, or even within my own classroom?
- How will my critique/feedback be offered and received, and how am I allowing for that to be challenged or clarified?
- How do I make expected student behavior explicit, and how might I explicitly offer alternatives?
- How do I share my vulnerability, so that students might learn to?
- How do I recognize my authority as a teacher? How can I relinquish some of that authority, or trade it for student autonomy? (*note: this question was constructed originally to be asked by a white male teacher to himself*)

Self-Audit/Lifelong Goals

These questions help to serve as a reminder that my work toward becoming anti-racist is never done.

- How are students involved with the creation of policy in our classroom?
- Do I allow myself to embrace discomfort in this anti-racist work?
- As I work through these questions, does a lack of knowledge about only *some* of my students emerge as a barrier? Why?
- As I work through these questions, ask, “*Am I tired/bored of answering them?*” Is that a form of privilege?
- What have I done *today* to further my work along the journey toward being an anti-racist educator?