VALUE AFFIRMATIVE
POLICY

*ADDRESSING **STEREOTYPES** IN THE CLASSROOM THROUGH **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION***

2023 - 2025

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OUR VISION

To, In Shaa Allah, nurture great minds to achieve their best through transformative knowledge, skills and character.

OUR MISSION

Our school will be among the top-ten highest-rated schools in Nigeria in 2025 through high-quality teaching and job-specific skills because every Nigerian child deserves access to life-changing education.

OUR CORE VALUES

- Character
- Courage
- Community

INTRODUCTION

This policy outlines our school's commitment to creating a positive, inclusive, and equitable learning environment for all students. We believe that every student deserves to feel valued, respected, and included in the classroom, regardless of their background or abilities. To this end, we must actively work to address stereotypes and biases that may exist within our school community.

STEREOTYPES IN THE CLASSROOM

Stereotypes are a belief-system that often stems from emotions and bias rather than fact. They are fixed images or ideologies that are formed through preconceptions and deeply influence one's perception and understanding of certain groups of people. These stereotypes can manifest in many forms, including social, cultural, gender, academic, age, ethnic, and religious biases.

In the classroom, they can have a significant impact on the way students interact with one another and the way they are perceived by their peers and teachers.

'Stereotype threat' is a psychological occurrence in which an individual's fear of confirming a negative stereotype about their group, can negatively impact their academic performance. This is particularly prevalent among members of underrepresented groups or those who are wrongly assumed to be academically inferior. This threat can have a negative impact on anyone, regardless of their background or identity.

ADDRESSING STEREOTYPES IN THE CLASSROOM

The classroom is a community, and in today's world, that community is increasingly diverse. Learners & scholars come from a wide range of backgrounds, with different orientations, upbringings, life experiences, beliefs and religious affiliations. As educators, it is our responsibility to nurture a culture of equality in our classroom, where every student is valued for who they are, and where their unique viewpoints are celebrated.

Each student in the classroom must feel seen, heard, and respected. This requires a persistent effort to drive the principles of equality into the consciousness of every student, and to ensure that all students understand the importance of treating their peers with dignity and respect.

As students become more aware of the importance of equality in the classroom through consistent and intentional practices and affirmations, stereotypes and biases begin to lose their grip on their mindsets.

We must, equally, recognize and value the diversity of students' backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. In doing this, we create an inclusive classroom environment that promotes equity and respect.

Promoting Equality

Equality is the understanding that everybody matters and should be treated with dignity, respect and fairness, regardless of their background, affiliation or abilities.

In the classroom, equality means:

- creating a safe and inclusive environment where every student feels comfortable and respected to be themselves.
- providing equal access to resources and opportunities for growth and self-discovery,
- treating every student with impartiality, regardless of their social, cultural, gender, age, religious, or ethnic orientations.
- giving equal opportunities for both boys and girls to compete in an effective learning environment, without any gender bias or discrimination.

Promoting equality in the classroom is an ongoing process that requires continuous effort and reflection. When teachers ensure that students feel just as important as their peers within the classroom, they help to create an equitable learning environment for all students.

Fostering Diversity

Diversity refers to the range of differences among people. Diversity is what makes one student different from another. It encompasses a wide range of characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, etc. It also includes diversity of thought, outlook and experiences. **In the classroom, students should relate and work with each other in the consciousness that they are all different, and that this difference is complementary.**

Diversity within the classroom prepares students for the interconnected world they will encounter in their future work and life. Global thinking and global workspace ensure students are ready for the future. This encompasses the ability to understand and appreciate different cultures, points of view, and ways of thinking. This alertness to the diversity in people is crucial, because in today's globalized world, being able to effectively collaborate and communicate with people from diverse backgrounds is increasingly important for success.

Teachers should also ensure that they are effectively harnessing the diverse strengths and talents of their students to promote positive learning outlook and outcomes. This can be achieved through collaboration & teamwork, and other activities that constantly bring students together. By fostering an understanding and appreciation of diversity, students are better equipped to navigate and succeed in a world that is becoming more and more connected and multicultural.

Championing Inclusion

Inclusion is the practice of creating an environment where all students feel welcomed, respected, and valued. It is the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity, thereby creating an environment where people from all backgrounds can learn, work and succeed together. It's about **creating a learning environment that works for *all* students.**

Inclusivity guarantees that every student in the classroom irrespective of their backgrounds has all the support needed to be a global citizen who respects equality and diversity. Teachers can achieve this through:
- building one-on-one relationships with each student as much possible.
- being aware of the specific needs of every student in the class.
- using teaching materials and resources that depict children from a variety of backgrounds and with varying abilities.
- encouraging interactions among students to build a sense of community and foster friendships.
- using adaptive learning instruction & materials so all students can participate according to their ability.
- providing opportunities for students to share their own experiences and perspectives. Students learn from each other and the various perspectives and existing knowledge their fellow students bring to the table.
- allowing their students choose how to show what they have learned.
- avoiding comparison of one student's progress to another; personal progress is key, no matter how small.
- increasing their own cultural competence and understanding of diversity issues to help them face their own biases.

Inclusion works because it gives students what we all want and need: a sense of belonging.

ACTIONABLE POINTS FOR ALL

Stereotypes can be deeply ingrained and difficult to overcome. The fear of being judged based on negative stereotypes and of inadvertently confirming those stereotypes can be a subtle and pervasive problem. Students who are stereotyped feel so much pressure from the weight of those fears that it hampers their performance and ability to learn. However, by doing our best to handle them in the classroom, we can create a more embracive and unbiased learning environment for all students, even outside the classroom. This is, however, not the duty of teachers alone. Everyone within the school community must embrace the drive to erase prejudice in the school environment.

These strategies among others shall be employed to address the issue of stereotypes:

1. **Raising awareness:** One important aspect of addressing stereotypes is to raise consciousness and awareness among teachers, students and other members of the school. Teachers are encouraged to have respectful discussions about diversity and cultural differences. Ensure everyone knows what stereotypes are and how they impact the learning environment. Teachers should seek opportunities to address stereotypes through open and honest discussions, whether they arise from the curriculum or from student interactions. Every teacher should strive to be a mentor and model for their students, ensuring fairness and treating every student equally in the classroom.

2. **Establishing & enforcing rules in the classroom:** It is important to establish clear guidelines and rules in the classroom that are consistently followed by all members of the class. Try to make these rules not about learning, specifically, but about ensuring everyone feels safe and respected. Examples of rules teachers could agree on with their learners & scholars are:

   - Use kind words at all times
   - Everyone is an important member of the class
   - Keep away from other students' property
   - Everyone has the right to feel safe and respected
   - Everyone has the right to express themselves and be listened to

   Just as teachers must make the basic class rules absolutely clear and understood, they must also agree on consequences when those class rules are ignored. These consequences must be proportionate and consistently applied. Make sure everyone understands that these rules represent the minimum, basic acceptable levels of behaviour in your class.

3. **Addressing negative behaviour in a sensitive manner:** Another important step is to address negative behaviors that may be rooted in stereotypes or biases. This means setting clear expectations for appropriate behaviour and addressing any incidents of discrimination or harassment swiftly and fairly. However, teachers and administrators should avoid humiliating students when dealing with negative behaviours; this is not inclusive, especially for children who are known to struggle with self-esteem issues. Students who exhibit model traits may be assigned to help identify and call to attention unacceptable behaviour.

4. **Fostering a growth-mindset in the classroom:** Promoting a growth mindset can help counteract the negative effects of stereotypes. It emphasises that one's potential is not fixed and can be developed with effort and perseverance. This can empower students to improve and excel in areas that may be currently challenging for them. Teachers should deliver feedback in a way that stresses that high standards are expected of *all* students and that *everyone*, including them, is capable of meeting those standards.

5. **Checking our bias at the door**: In order to do this, we must first admit that we have biases and if we are truly honest with ourselves, we *all have biases*. Teachers should take an inward look, and when we do identify our biases, ensure we do not take it with us into the classroom.

6. **Encouraging and supporting healthy competitions:** This means fostering an environment where competition is fair, respectful and embracive, and where all students are valued for their unique ways of learning, thinking and expressing themselves. This should be implemented by encouraging girls to participate and be expressive, and boys to be themselves. This way, all contributions are acknowledged and respected, understanding that everyone has a different viewpoint.

7. **Incorporating diversity in curriculum and instruction:** This means including diverse perspectives and experiences in the curriculum, and teaching in a way that is sensitive and responsive to the cultural backgrounds of all students. School Management should make sure diversity is considered when designing curriculum and supervising teaching.

8. **Empowering student voice and agency:** Students should be given opportunities to share their views and experiences. We must encourage students to take on leadership roles in the school and community, and actively seek out and valuing their opinions and ideas. This is a good way to create an inclusive school culture.

9. **Regular training and professional development for staff:** The school would endeavour to equip staff with the knowledge and skills to address diversity and inclusion issues in the classroom. This involves providing professional development opportunities that focus on cultural competency, which will help teachers understand and effectively teach and interact with students from varied backgrounds.

10. **Collaborating with families, community, and organizations:** Partnering with families, community members, and organizations is crucial to the successful implementation of the Value Affirmative Policy. As such, the school will involve these groups in the execution of this Policy, as well as seek their feedback to make creating it is meeting the needs of the school community. Additionally, collaboration with organizations can provide access to valuable resources, such as cultural competency training and other programmes that support inclusion and equity.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The School Board is responsible for the regular monitoring, assessment, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's value affirmative policy to ensure it is meeting the needs of all students, staff, and community members.

CONCLUSION

The type of classroom climate we seek to create and the teaching techniques we use can produce an environment that either supports or impedes our diverse students.

By working together to eradicate stereotypes, and create an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students, we can support the academic, social, and emotional development of every student, hence producing students who can succeed in any function efficiently in a multicultural society.

NOBLE GUIDE

ACADEMY

Character. Courage. Community