

What is a values affirmation intervention, and what does it aim to address?

- A values affirmation intervention is a classroom exercise designed to bolster students who may be most likely to experience a negative classroom climate. It aims to give students from underrepresented backgrounds a voice in a class where they may feel undermined or intimidated by stereotype threat.

Why might you want to implement the values affirmation intervention in your course? What do you hope to achieve?

- I would like to implement this in my class because I am always looking for ways to promote inclusivity in my classroom. As a white person I want to do everything I can to make students of color feel welcome. I hope to see if this makes any kind of difference in the classroom environment. I work hard outside of this intervention to make my students feel included but using some research-based methods is intriguing.

Why did you decide to incorporate values affirmation intervention into your class? How is it useful to you as an instructor? How is it useful to students?

- I wanted to try an evidence-based technique to let the students voice what is important to them. It is interesting to read their responses. I have the students fill out a student profile sheet prior to the start of the semester where I ask some questions similar to the values affirmation exercise (not quite as deep), to give them a chance to introduce themselves. I wonder if the addition of this values affirmation exercise makes the students feel even more that they have a voice. It is always useful as an instructor to hear what the students care about and what motivates their learning. It can help me think about ways to creatively present material and/or speak during class to promote inclusivity. I think it is useful to students because they feel that the instructor is interested in hearing about what is important to them. The students feel like less of a number (in a class of almost 400) and like a real, human participant in a STEM course.

How does the values affirmation task fit into your class? How long does it take for students to complete? How should points in the course be assigned for students' work on the values affirmation assignment(s)?

- I made it worth one concept check quiz. There are 28 total concept check quizzes this semester and the students get to drop 2. Concept check quizzes are worth 10 percent of their grade. On average the students spent about 5 minutes on the exercise. In general, if advising other faculty, I would say this needs to have some small point value (1-2%).

What pitfalls should be avoided?

- If a faculty member wants to implement this, it is best if it's prepared ahead of time and a part of the syllabus so the students are aware of the assignment right from the start of the course. I think the exercise itself is good but do not see a value in implementing it more than once, as they did in the Jordt paper. If there are two implementations of this exercise, the second one should be a follow-up to the first. It would be maybe most effective if the second set of questions were designed based on what students answered from the first set. I understand that this idea may be difficult to collect data on, though.
- Rushing and not having a plan. Making it too big of a part of the grade. Measuring sense of belonging before and at end of semester.

How do we explain to students about the purpose of the activity (if at all)?

- The messaging that I implemented in the spring 2021 semester is below. I think we need to discuss some purpose with them to show the students that we are constantly working toward making their classroom experience as meaningful as possible.

Messaging for students:

I am in a faculty focus group this semester where ***we are discussing how to make large STEM classrooms more inclusive and meaningful for all students***. The other faculty members and myself would very much appreciate it if you could take this [5-minute survey](#) (can find it under quizzes). We will do another survey later in the semester but this is the first of two. **It will be graded as a concept check quiz and on participation only (no right or wrong answers)**. Thank you for taking a few minutes out of your busy schedules to do this!

What, in your view, is the most important thing to know about implementing this type of intervention? (e.g. if you were telling a colleague about it who had never implemented it before)

- I would stress to the colleague that this is not a difficult or time consuming task but could have some real impact on the students in the course. I think the most important thing is that you are giving the students a chance to share some of their thoughts and ideas with you. Many students crave the interpersonal connections with their teachers and this exercise is one way they can describe to you the values that they are bringing to their learning in your course.

Has implementing this intervention made you think about other potential areas in which you'd like to improve equity and outcomes in your classes? If so, please describe.

- By implementing this intervention one time this spring 2021 semester, my biggest takeaway was that I enjoyed reading the students' responses. I have a reflection assignment built into my course so between the values affirmation exercise and their reflection essays, I feel that the students were able to share a lot of who they are with me. This enriches my online teaching experience considerably. I think the exercise has affirmed that I want to continue doing assignments where the students share personal experiences and stories. Knowing that a professor cares enough to ask you these questions, read your responses, and even possibly respond can motivate a student and ultimately improve outcomes.